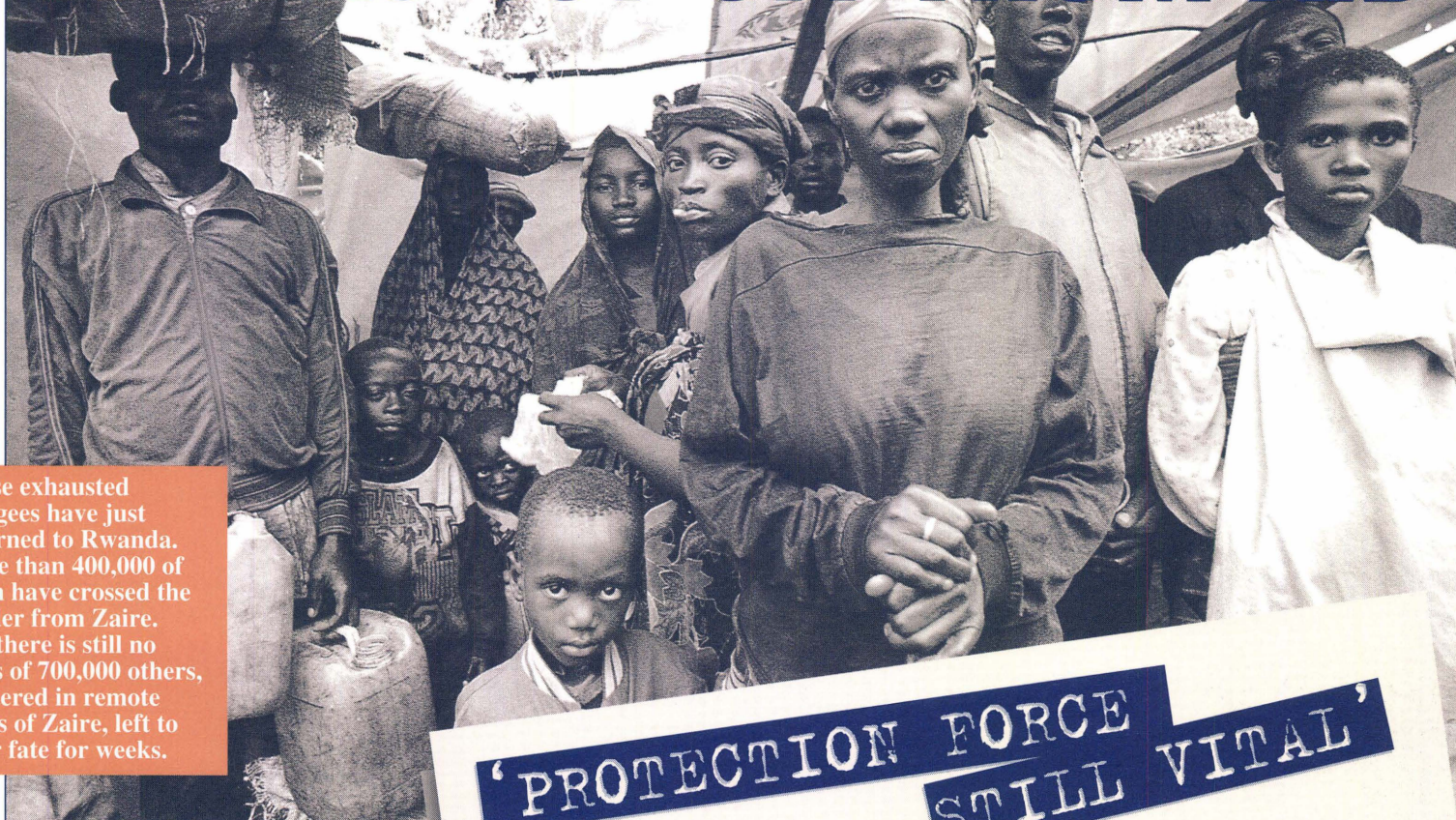


New disaster strikes the Great Lakes region VICTIMS CUT OFF FROM AID



These exhausted refugees have just returned to Rwanda. More than 400,000 of them have crossed the border from Zaire. But there is still no news of 700,000 others, scattered in remote areas of Zaire, left to their fate for weeks.

Since mid-October, the Great Lakes region has been hit once more by a humanitarian tragedy on the same scale as the disaster two years ago following the genocide in Rwanda of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. At the time, there were nearly two million refugees in camps along the Burundi and Rwanda borders, giving rise to a situation of constant danger because of increasingly frequent border skirmishes (see Echonews N°9). Since mid-October more than a million refugees living in camps in eastern Zaire have fled deeper into the country to escape the fighting in Nord- and Sud-Kivu between the Zairean army and Zairean Tutsi/Banyamulenge rebels. Most of the camps have been attacked and looted, forcing hundreds of thousands of refugees and 100,000 Zaireans living in the area to flee in panic.

'PROTECTION FORCE STILL VITAL'

Emma Bonino, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

On 21 November, in a speech to the European Parliament on the plight of the refugees in eastern Zaire Emma Bonino, Commissioner responsible for humanitarian aid, once more accused the international community of indifference bordering on racism. There is still no news of the fate of these refugees.

"We decided that intervention could be justified for 1.2 million refugees, but now we are turning our backs on that undertaking because the situation has 'changed'. How many lives must be directly at risk to justify the 'civilised' world in deploying troops? A million? Five hundred thousand? A hundred thousand? And does the colour of their skin make a difference? The fact that five hundred thousand refugees have returned to Rwanda doesn't change the fate of the 700,000 abandoned in Sud-Kivu, in an area which no observers and no aid have been able to reach for more than four weeks. The hesitations expressed by influential members of the United Nations are shameful, and an insult to public opinion. I've even heard remarks along the lines of 'nobody wants to go down there for Christmas'. The refugees aren't exactly getting ready to party and I don't really think the arrival of help would put them out. My office has been literally overwhelmed with faxes from ordinary people all over Europe. They are all calling for military intervention to put an end to the ordeal of these innocent victims. I have absolutely no doubt that we still need to send a multinational force."

In recent weeks Emma Bonino has kept up the pressure for a multinational military force with a mandate to ensure that humanitarian aid can reach the victims, to disarm the extremists and to allow the voluntary return of refugees to Rwanda.

"Things have been dragged out for long enough, and if the international force is put off for another three weeks there will be plenty of work burying the dead but perhaps not much else left to do", she told the European Parliament at Strasbourg, after her mission to the Great Lakes region in mid-November.

Turpin/Gamma

CEE - VIII/57

LAST-MINUTE NEWS IN BRIEF

As we went to press, refugees were still crossing the Rwandan border at Goma. After fleeing combat zones, they wandered for four weeks in the forests of Kivu, eating roots and drinking rainwater. The weakest died. On 25 November, at a meeting of 23 countries in Stuttgart to discuss a military intervention force, the number of refugees who had returned to Rwanda was estimated at 575,000, and those remaining in Zaire at 250,000, leaving a further 300,000 people who could not be traced.

Humanitarian aid cut off

The dangerous conditions caused by fighting, the road blocks set up by the military, and widespread anarchy (including the looting of humanitarian supplies and equipment) have led to the evacuation of relief workers. Humanitarian aid has been cut off in Kivu. Since 30 October, aid agencies in the region have literally lost all trace of hundreds of thousands of people, abandoned to their fate. In spite of diplomatic efforts to open up the roads to aid convoys, all access to these people has been banned.

While the United Nations Security Council was making up its mind about sending a multinational force to reach the victims, the refugees began to move towards Rwanda on 15 November. Three days later 400,000 of them had crossed the border (see interview below). However, there is still no news of the

remaining 700,000 refugees and displaced people who remain cut off in Sud-Kivu.

Redirecting aid

Although it is very difficult to come to an accurate assessment of humanitarian needs in such unpredictable circumstances, ECHO has prepared an action plan which was submitted to the Council on 7 November by Emma Bonino, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid. With the help of ECHO experts in the Great Lakes region, ECHO has drawn up an inventory of supplies, transport and personnel available. Several possible scenarios have been envisaged, so that the relief programme can be reorganised to enable aid workers to cope with whatever happens in a shifting situation. However, nothing can happen without two essential preconditions: access to the victims and protection for both refugees and humanitarian workers.

Emma Bonino and the ministerial "troika" visited the Great Lakes region on 9-11 November. In spite of repeated approaches to government representatives in Zaire and Rwanda, no-one was prepared to guarantee access to the victims. The mission concluded that international military intervention was vital.

ECHO is preparing a 10 million ECU aid package to help everyone affected – refugees, displaced and missing persons, people who have been repatriated and other vulnerable groups. Its partners in the field are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which looks after refugees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which has responsibility for those displaced within their own countries.

Since the Burundi crisis of October 1993, the Great Lakes region has received 450 million ECU in European Commission humanitarian aid (ECHO assistance and food aid). As well as emergency aid, ECHO also supports repatriation programmes and programmes for resettling refugees. These programmes are essential if the situation in this region is to return to normal. When they return to their place of origin, refugees are given the basics such as seeds, cooking utensils and the tools they need to resume a normal life. Beyond this short-term aid, projects supported by DG VIII (Development) take over.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE LOST CHILDREN

- Interview -

Muriel Cornelis, head of the MSF-Belgium mission in Rwanda

How did you cope with the sudden return of the refugees?

Our teams had been waiting for weeks for permission to go into Zaire, so we were prepared for a large-scale operation. But we hadn't expected so many people, in such a short space of time, all in the same place. At the frontier post of the crossing point between Goma and Gisenyi we suddenly saw the first refugees arriving - it was in mid-afternoon on Friday 15 November. As the hours passed, the flow of people grew from a trickle, and by the following day there was an extraordinary sight: the refugees were walking eight abreast, we estimated that 12,000 people an hour were passing. The strongest arrived first, and we were very surprised by how fit they seemed. But by Saturday afternoon, more and more of the people arriving were sick and exhausted. MSF quickly set up a field hospital and made sure that water was available every four kilometres along the refugees' route. We

also set up several "way stations" where the refugees could rest, drink water and receive basic care.

What are the main problems?

First of all, drinking water, because we didn't have enough for such a huge number of people. Dehydration and diarrhoea are major problems. Another urgent problem is the plight of unaccompanied children: UNICEF has already registered more than 4,000 children who have lost their parents

in the mad rush. Several attempts were made to find missing families all along the route. Loud-hailers were used to urge children to stay close to their parents. Children travelling alone were brought together in reception centres.

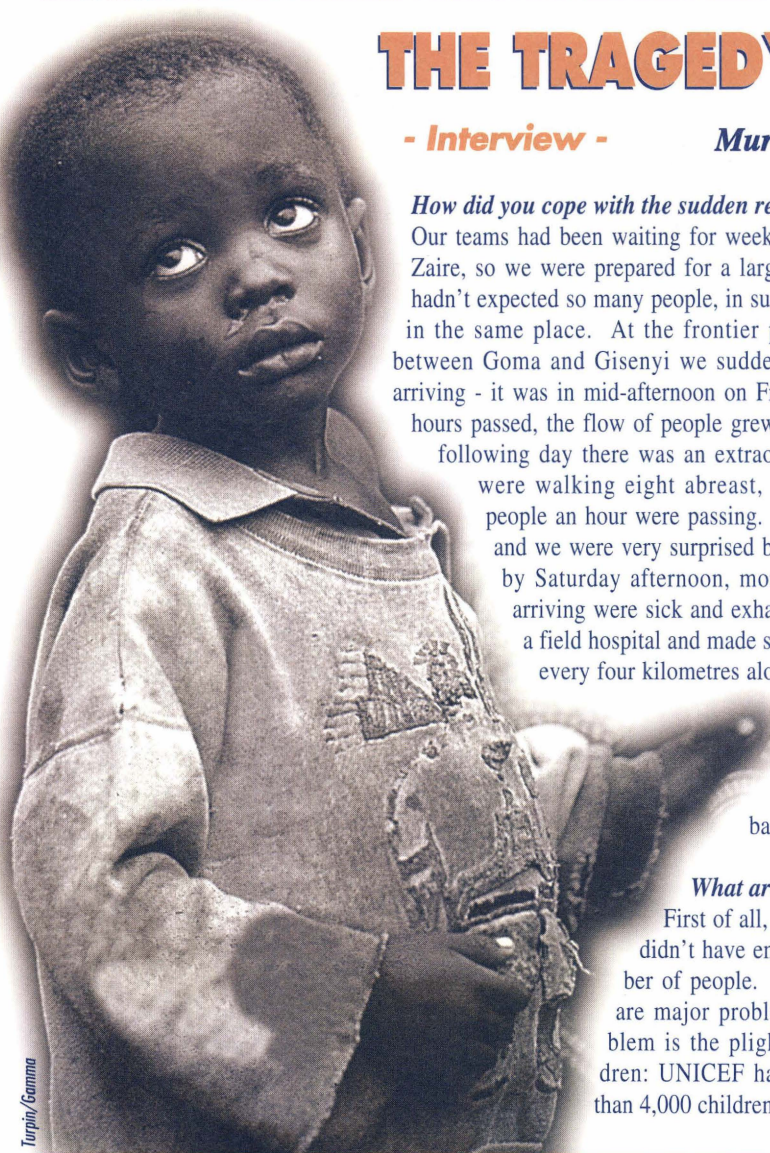
Where are the refugees going? What is their state of mind?

Most of them are going back to the places they came from. After two years in camps controlled by extremist leaders, they have all sort of fears: will they find their homes and land? Just how safe is it to return? Will justice be done?

It's generally thought that half a million people returned to Rwanda in the space of four days. Where are the others?

Humanitarian organisations can't reach these people, which is an unacceptable situation. The 700,000 people still wandering in the east of Zaire need help more than ever. The refugees of Sud-Kivu, who have been completely dependent on humanitarian aid for the last two years, have been cut off for the last four weeks. We are also very worried about the Zairean people who have been forced to move because of the fighting. We are continuing to ask for direct access to Zaire through the airport at Bukavu, under the protection of an international force.

Muriel Cornelis was interviewed by Isabelle Brusselmanns on 20.11.96



Turpin/Gamma

According to UNICEF, there are about 4,200 children who got separated from their parents in the rush back to Rwanda. Loudspeaker announcements along the route were used to try and reunite families. The system helped over 1,000 children to find their parents. If their parents cannot be traced, children are taken back to their home township. That still leaves the problem of the youngest children who don't know where they come from...

12 months after the Madrid Declaration...

the debate continues

On December 14, 1995, officials representing humanitarian agencies and donors gathered for the first time ever to consider the future of humanitarian aid operations. Sponsored by Emma Bonino, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, this ground-breaking Summit in Madrid drew to a close with the publication of a declaration featuring a set of principles and various options for humanitarian activities. Twelve months on, ECHOnews has asked the signatories of the Madrid Declaration and other leading figures on the humanitarian scene to focus once again on the current and long-term issues concerning humanitarian action. The following is a collection of their reflections on this subject.



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a supplement to ECHOnews n° 13

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Coordination

By Yasushi Akashi

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
UN DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITARIAN
AFFAIRS (DHA)

Coordination is a term much used, abused and misunderstood. At its most fundamental level, in the context of humanitarian assistance, it is about saving lives. Few would deny that the effective provision of humanitarian assistance requires that duplication, waste, and competition among the many agencies involved be avoided. However, agreement on the institutional, administrative, and operational dimensions of coordination is more difficult.

There are at least two basic reasons why efforts to ensure effective coordination must be pursued. First, the volatility of crisis environments, and second, the multiplicity of actors. Post-Cold War crisis are no longer simple affairs of the mono-causal or mono-response variety. The political, military, human rights and humanitarian dimensions, as well as the economic and development implications, now all come together accordion-style. Someone must ensure that all the actors - the traditional UN agencies, ICRC, the myriad NGOs and the local authorities - know how to read from the same music sheet. Put differently, a coordination entity is essential to

orchestrate the management of the various inputs and programmes, so that all the actors can fit into a coherent and effective response guided by a shared strategic vision.

In simpler times, before emergencies became complex, coordination was not an issue. UN agencies would "coordinate" their particular sector of competence. If the problem was one of refugees, as in El Salvador in early 1980s, UNHCR was in the driver's seat. If the problem was drought and famine - as in the Sahel - WFP and UNICEF bore the brunt of the relief effort. In some cases, when there was a clear need to provide leadership to a joint UN effort, one organization would be designated as "lead agency" - for instance UNICEF or WFP during the effort to provide assistance to victims of conflict in southern Sudan in the '80s.

Volatile and insecure environments

In the 1970s and 1980s there were only one or two major emergencies to be addressed each year and requiring special coordination mechanisms. Today, in crises ranging from Afghanistan to Zaire, more than 15 complex emergencies require UN coordination annually. Another telling indicator is the number of persons displaced by conflict: refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) increased from approximately 12 million in 1983 to over 40 million in 1995. The escalation of conflicts and displacements has caused an extraordinary increase in the need for a humanitarian response. Moreover, the qualitative changes, in particular the implications of working in volatile and insecure environments where humanitarian assistance often becomes enmeshed in conflict, have also been dramatic.

The need to ensure a degree of automaticity and predictability in UN coordination arrangements for humanitarian assistance has been acutely felt only in recent years. The failure of the UN system to mount a rapid and coordinated response to the exodus of Kurdish refugees from

Iraq into Turkey in early 1991 triggered serious debate within the donor community and ultimately led to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 in late 1991 and the establishment of the new UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in 1992. The realization that a new type of complex, conflict-related emergencies required humanitarian agencies to interact with military peace operations also reinforced the perceived need for coordination.

Clarification of roles

The establishment of DHA and of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - in which all UN agencies involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance are represented, as well as ICRC, the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the major NGO coordination bodies - has facilitated a process of policy review and clarification of roles and responsibilities in the humanitarian community. Innovations such as the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and the Complex Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) have significantly improved the international response to crises.

In most recent complex emergencies, DHA has exercised what is best described as coordination by consensus. The degree of consensus seems to vary. In Rwanda, it was high at the breaking stages of the crisis when all turned to the DHA coordination office for information and advice, but started decreasing shortly thereafter as UN agencies and NGOs established their presence on a surer footing. In Afghanistan too, the need for active coordination ebbed and flowed with the fluctuating levels of security.

DHA acts principally as an advocate and a facilitator. "Advocacy" involves the ability to provide a global vision of the problem, intellectual and strategic leadership, and to engage in diplomatic efforts to ensure access to victims. At the international, national, and local levels, it provides the linkages and the necessary interaction with the political and, where relevant, the peace-keeping, human rights and other components of the UN effort. Improvements are still required, in particular in order to ensure that the various actors within and outside the UN system fully understand the mandates of the humanitarian agencies and that, in all but extreme circumstances (that is, when UN actors operate without the consent of the warring parties under Chapter VII of the UN Charter), assistance is provided on the basis of a consensus of all parties involved.



Allowing the agencies to operate in best conditions

Being a "facilitator" requires DHA to provide a framework and a range of services which allow humanitarian relief agencies to operate under the best possible conditions. It does so even where it has been given operational responsibilities, as in the case of de-mining and assistance to the internally displaced in Afghanistan. Wherever it functions, DHA supplies the software for coordination to occur.

The reluctance to utilize a common software has by no means disappeared, either in the wider international humanitarian community or among UN relief agencies.

Individual humanitarian actors, be they UN agencies, bilateral donors, national or international NGOs, often have their own agendas. The same applies to host governments and local or de facto authorities who may see humanitarian assistance as part of their political strategies.

Adding a bureaucratic layer

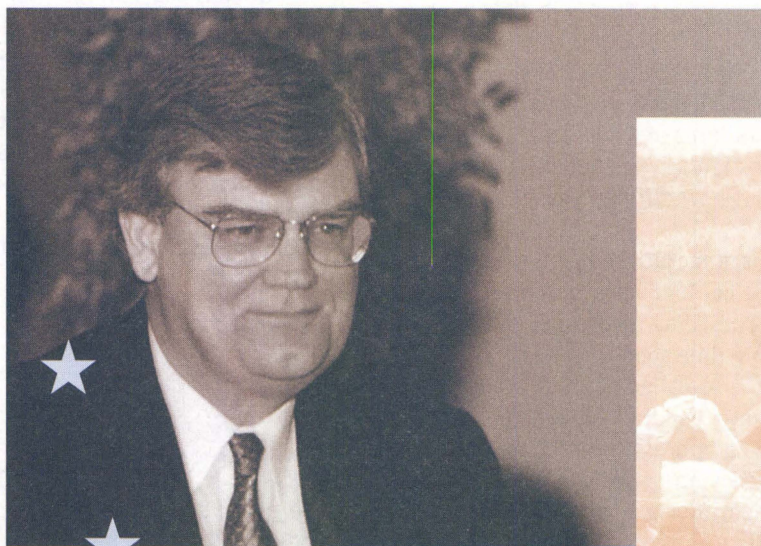
Is Coordination really necessary? Some humanitarian actors argue that institutionalizing UN coordination of humanitarian assistance adds a bureaucratic layer to a process that is self-regulating. Agencies have clear mandates and they should be allowed to get on with their job. Turf problems between adjoining sectors or ambiguities of mandates will be ironed out through information exchange and proximity in the same operational theatre. This will ensure that sufficient coordination will occur by itself or through the dominance of one agency over others.

This is a flawed vision and a recipe for confusion and wasteful competition. The complexity and volatility of crises and the presence of a multitude of actors on the ground are powerful arguments for more unity of purpose in the response. In most cases this can only be achieved through a well-defined coordination mechanism without operational responsibilities. The increasing realization that effectiveness and accountability go hand in hand is an additional argument for an entity which sets standards and guidelines while eschewing vested interests in programme implementation. The most effective humanitarian response occurs when a clear coordination structure allows each actor to carry out its activities unimpeded, on the basis of its mandate and comparative advantage, but well harmonized within an overall strategy. The tendency to "go it alone" is often ineffective if not counter-productive.

Our biggest challenge : to deal in a much more realistic way with humanitarian needs

By J. Brian Atwood

USAID ADMINISTRATOR
(U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)



Last year international donor and humanitarian organizations met in Madrid to take stock of the challenges facing them in the post-Cold War world. There were reasons to be cautiously optimistic. The old security threats, which consumed inordinately large national expenditures and preoccupied the global community for 45 years, had diminished with astonishing rapidity.

At the time of the Madrid meeting, there were reasons to believe that we had turned the corner on Bosnia and Angola. Impressive progress also had been made in healing the wounds of civil strife in Mozambique.

We also assessed the situation in Rwanda and while there was a general consensus that small, yet hopeful, steps were being made in the recovery from one of the most horrendous genocides in modern history, the difficulty of the situation was clear. The current crisis in the Great Lakes Region of Africa has given legitimacy to the apprehensions we felt less than a year ago in Madrid. There is one lesson being driven home by the current tragedy unfolding in Zaire. In complex emergencies the international community can no longer isolate the provision of humanitarian assistance to legitimate refugees from those who would manipulate such assistance for their own political and military ends. There are consequences and those consequences are being played out with a vengeance in Zaire. Last December in Madrid, I observed that we could not allow our efforts to meet the legitimate needs of legitimate refugees in Zaire and Tanzania to become the fertile ground of another round of ethnic conflict.

Taking lessons from our failures and successes

The efforts to bring the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide to justice have foundered on the altar of bureaucratic inertia. The unwillingness, or inability, to find the means to separate the ex-Far and Interhamwe from the legitimate refugees has ensured the inevitability of the current round of bloodletting. For the past two years we have witnessed growing insecurity along the Zaire/Uganda/Rwanda/Burundi borders, and inside Eastern Zaire incidents of violence inexorably undermined relief and recovery efforts in the region, pulling hundreds of thousands of innocents into its deadly vortex.

Hopefully, at the end of the day, we will take seriously the lessons we have learned from both our failures and successes. And one of the lessons is that we should harbor no illusions about how difficult the future will be.

First, it is imperative that we be realistic. Crisis and conflict have become fixtures of the post-Cold War landscape. This will not change any time soon.

Second, the so-called peace dividend has not resulted in a windfall of new or additional resources to address these crises. We must continue striving to operate more effectively and collaboratively within current resource constraints.

Finally, by itself, humanitarian assistance will not solve the problem of failed and failing states, particularly if provision of such assistance ignores the root causes of conflict. We are in a new era, confronted by new, more difficult, and uncertain challenges. We must change the manner in which we respond to a different kind of humanitarian emergency than what we have grown accustomed to over the past 45 years. Our biggest challenge is not our ability to deal effectively with humanitarian needs of people displaced by wars between states or natural disasters. Our biggest challenge is to deal in a much more realistic way with humanitarian needs stemming from complex emergencies where the provision of food, water, medicines and sanctuary can be manipulated for political and military ends.

A terrible irony

In Madrid, we committed ourselves as leaders of the international community, to focus our resources and intellectual capacities collaboratively in developing and applying preventive tools of statecraft for the purpose of crisis management and crisis mitigation.

We committed ourselves to finding creative solutions to the vexing problem of the transition from crisis to peace, stability and sustainable development. To achieve these objectives, humanitarian assistance should be viewed as one of many essential tools in ameliorating political, social, and cultural faultlines within any given society.

However, we face a terrible irony. On the one hand, preventive diplomacy, which is a multifaceted and complex undertaking, is our best hope for a more stable and prosperous world. On the other hand, as we are confronted by a growing number of complex emergencies, the international community is experiencing a steady erosion of support for helping poorer countries develop. As more resources are spent on humanitarian disasters, less is being spent to prevent them. As national legislatures look to squeeze budgets even tighter, the preventive medicine of international development and diplomacy is placed lower and lower on the priority list. In other words, we are marshalling the resources and the will to treat the disease, but not to prevent it. It was within this context that the European Commission and the United States started meeting in September of 1995 to establish a high level consultative group for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. We designed it to serve as a mechanism which would allow us to systematically strengthen our collaboration.

Joint assessment

We also laid out an ambitious agenda and goals for ourselves last December in Madrid. Despite the setbacks in the Great Lakes Region of Africa and the tenuous peace in Bosnia, the United States and the European Commission can be proud of our accomplishments in a relatively short period of time.

These accomplishments include the joint assessment that Commissioner Emma Bonino and I carried out in the Great Lakes Region last April. It was a useful means of establishing both a joint position and better coordinated programming in that troubled region. We took the first steps toward broadening that collaboration to include multilateral institutions and the private voluntary organizations. We all recognized that we simply could not afford to act in isolation from one another. I am hopeful that we will be able to follow up our first joint mission with another in this coming year.

Our recent consultations in Washington also confirmed that there has been significant progress since our Madrid meeting. We are sharing program and resource allocation information on a regular basis. We have also made significant advances in the day-to-day operational coordination, both in the field and at the headquarters level. The current joint US-EC technical assessment of the situation in Sierra Leone is a good example of this kind of working level collaboration.

More broadly, I am pleased that we are making continual progress in improving our crisis coordination at all levels. The recent discussions and joint US-EC statement issued during our Washington consultation on the situation in eastern Zaire were a good start.

The continuation of this collaboration between the U.S. and EC is more essential than ever. We are witnessing the tremendous costs both in human and financial terms associated with the complex emergency phenomenon. While the relief community continues its heroic efforts to meet the basic needs of the tragic victims of conflict, we are still confronted by the same haunting question: "Did this need to happen?" It is our responsibility to do all within our capacities to insure that we act intelligently, quickly and within a broader political, economic and social framework in the deployment of all our resources — humanitarian and development. If we do so, there may be crises looming on the horizon that we can proudly say did not in fact happen.





UNICEF / G. PIROZZI

By Carol Bellamy

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNICEF

It was the suffering of children in war that prompted the founding of UNICEF in 1946, and it is the continuing suffering of children that reminds us of how much more we need to do. More than 149 major wars have raged during those 50 years, killing 23 million people. Children, however, have been the most vulnerable and the ones who bear the brunt of the suffering. Over the last decade alone, 2 million children have died because of wars, 12 million have been left homeless, over 25 million have become refugees, 4 to 5 million have been disabled, and 1 million have been orphaned.

Total ban on landmines : erecting a shield of protection around children caught in armed conflicts

Mines look like toys

Of all the weapons that have been used in these wars, few are more persistent and more lethal to children than land-mines. In 64 countries, where an estimated 110 million land-mines are lodged in the ground, children pick up or step on the devices while herding animals, working in the fields or just playing. Since many of the explosives look like toys, tops, pineapples or butterflies, children are drawn to them. In some areas, children scavenge mines for scrap metal.

Limbleless and blind children around the world bear witness to land-mines' path of destruction. Since 1975, the devices have killed or maimed more than 1 million people. They continue to kill 800 people each month and disable more than 1,000 others. Women and children in Angola account for most of the country's 20,000 amputees. In El Salvador, about 75 per cent of those injured or killed were children. Many of today's land-mines, which can remain active for decades, were planted before their youngest victims were born.

In commemorating its 50th anniversary year, UNICEF proposed an Anti-war Agenda that would help erect a shield of protection around children caught in armed conflict. The centerpiece of that Agenda is a call for an international law banning the production, use, stockpiling, sale and export of anti-personnel mines. By doing so, UNICEF has joined a growing number of organizations proposing such a measure.



HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL

The last remaining enemy

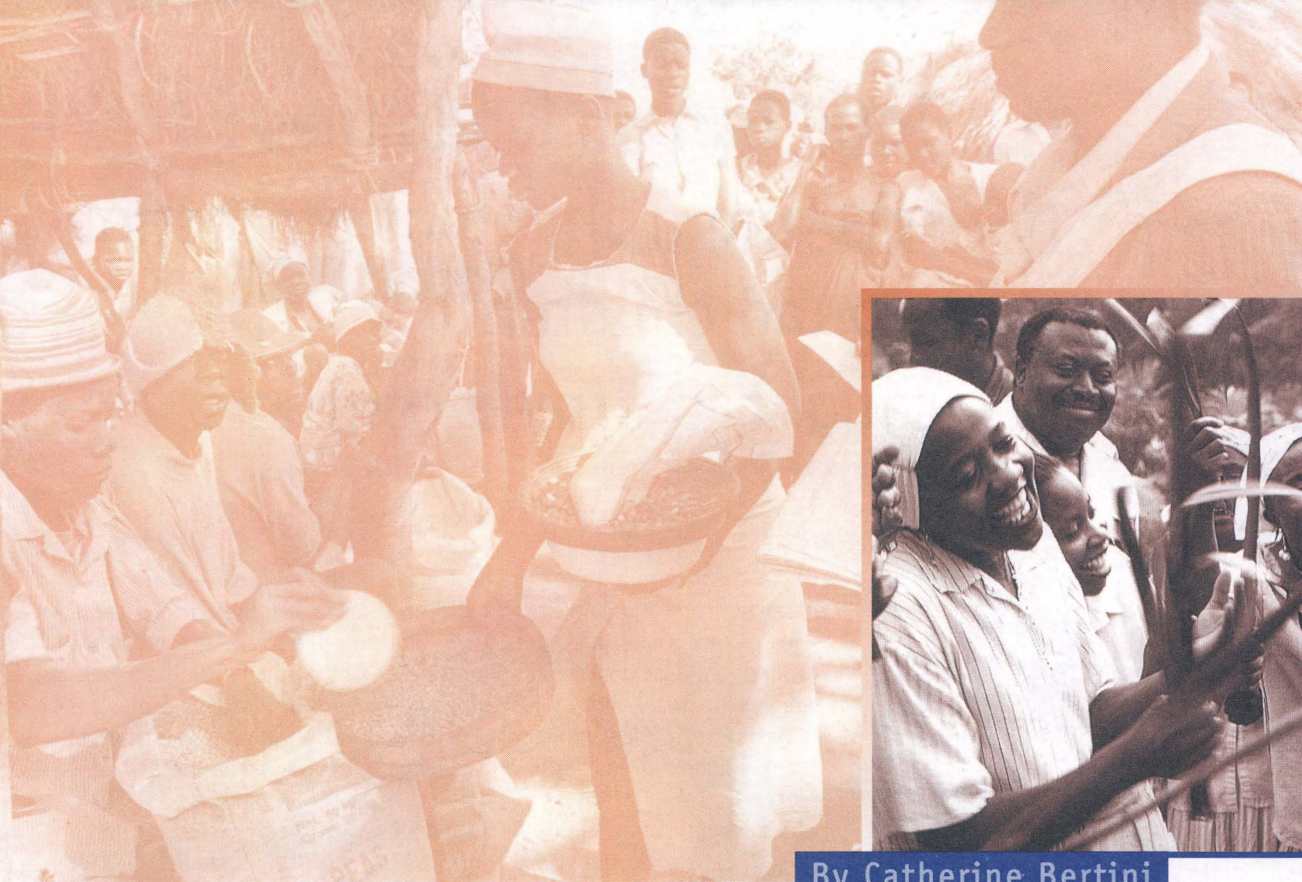
As countries consider their policies towards anti-personnel mines, I hope they will consider not only the appalling humanitarian consequences of mines, but also their economic cost. By keeping refugees in camps and forcing fertile land to lie fallow, the millions of land-mines currently lying in wait cost donor governments tens of millions of dollars in aid every year. By continuing to block roads in post-conflict societies, they hinder economic activity, reducing opportunities for expansion of world trade. The global cost of clearing mines — already estimated by the UN to top \$33 billion — far outweighs the profits made on their sale. And as NATO's Implementation Force has found out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, peacekeeping becomes an expensive business, in both lives and equipment, when mines are the last remaining enemy.

The campaign for a total ban on land-mines is far from over. It will continue, fueled by the passion of organizations like UNICEF and the many other advocates of an outright ban, and through initiatives such as the Madrid Humanitarian Summit. In the meantime, the challenge remains to ensure that all children are spared suffering and death that can be easily prevented, and that their essential rights — to survival, development, protection and participation — are respected.

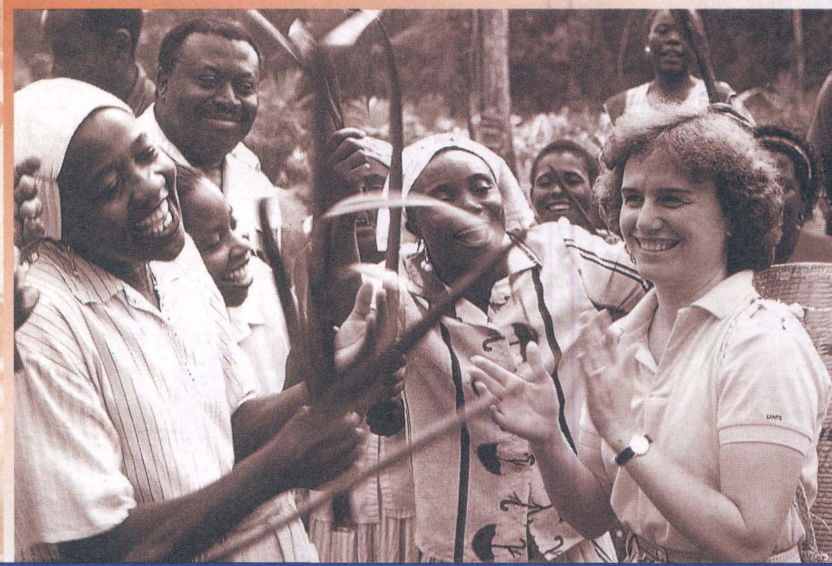
The world remains indecisive

The world community recently had a chance to join the drive to diminish the suffering of children in times of war by banning all anti-personnel mines. But at the international weapons conference that was convened in Geneva earlier this year, governments avoided such a ban. They instead chose a watered-down alternative that will legitimize the use of some land-mines for years. Meanwhile, children continue to be killed and crippled each day that the world remains indecisive.

The Geneva conference decided that the military need for land-mines outweighed their human cost. But was that right? At least 49 governments that support the total ban don't think so. Growing numbers of military experts in the United States and abroad don't think so — in fact, they call for a prohibition on anti-personnel land-mines. The United Nations Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross don't think so either. Nor do more than 450 private organizations worldwide that make up the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.



UNHCR



By Catherine Bertini

WFP / T. HASKELL

Women, hunger and hope

Last December, in our pressing appeal to the world for action to stem the explosion of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, I and other representatives of humanitarian agencies urged in Madrid that priority be given to the needs of women and children.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

This December, as last, women and children make up the vast majority of the victims of armed conflicts. Today, just like a year ago, it is mostly they who have to flee, suffer, starve and often die because of the fighting and fear generated, mainly, by men.

Only too frequently they die because, being by definition the poorest of the poor, they are malnourished and less able to withstand their ordeal. For poverty and hunger are not impartial. Seven out of ten of the world's hungry poor are women and children. And in many societies women feed the men first, then the children and only when these have had their fill do they finally eat whatever - if anything - is left.

solution. Hunger and poverty are a major cause, as well as a result, of conflicts. In the short term - that is, in emergencies - and in the long term women can and should play a crucial role in combating both.

We at World Food Programme, the United Nations' food aid agency, have learned from experience that the best way of feeding victims of crises is to place the food in the hands of women. That way we can be reasonably sure that it will reach its intended destination: the mouths of their families. Normally

it is put in the hands of men, it is too often sold or used as leverage in power struggles. In emergencies, for instance like Rwanda and Somalia, when we have to feed hundreds of thousands of desperate people, it is only too easy to use the existing community power structure which, almost by definition, is dominated by men.

We do not want the easy way out any longer - we intend to involve local women from the outset in planning emergency operations, and in distributing and monitoring the food supplies. It will take strong commitment, patience and persuasion to see it through.

There are other great advantages to this approach. When disaster strikes and populations flee their homes and land, households may be the only remnant of social structure left. A household with a mother who is involved in her community socially and economically is far more likely to withstand the traumas of the situation than one in which everyone is utterly helpless.

Food should be in the hand of women

The cost to humanity is appalling. One billion women in the world, for instance, are anaemic. Many of them lose their children in childbirth or soon after because they lacked the proper nutrients during pregnancy. And the children that survive, unless they are lucky enough to get good nourishment soon after birth, will never develop their full physical and mental potential. No wonder that many humanitarian crises take a high toll. Yet while women are the principal victims of crises, they are also an important part of the

Creating food security through women

In the longer term any solution to endemic hunger must also involve women. For women not only prepare and serve the food, they are also major producers. Few people realise that women produce 80% of the food in Africa and 60% in Asia. Recognising this fact, and giving women equal access to credits, advice, fertilisers and the other facilities needed by farmers would be a major step to creating food security in places where it does not yet exist.

We in the WFP are determined to turn this knowledge into action. Our Gender Action Plan, is designed to help women gain equal access to, and control over, food. To make sure that it works, specific targets have been set, strategies mapped out, staff are being trained, progress will be strictly monitored and officers will be judged by their success in achieving the plan's goals. If we succeed, we will have made an important step towards reducing hunger worldwide.

Military support to humanitarian interventions

By Emma Bonino

EU COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

As it was made clear in the very first paragraph of the Madrid Declaration, natural and man-made disasters show no sign of abating, while resources to cope with them have probably reached the upper limit of what donor countries, rightly or wrongly, deem affordable.

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) has programs underway in some 60 different countries of this world. They all lay outside the present borders of the EU, in places that may be as remote as North Korea, Tadjikistan, Zaire, or Nicaragua. Such a far-flung effort entails considerable transportation costs: out of every six ECU spent on humanitarian aid by the Union, one goes to actually moving these goods to the spots where they are most needed. Thus, in 1995 transport absorbed slightly less than 100 million, or \$120 million. As an order of magnitude, consider that this amount of money roughly corresponds to the last six months of EU humanitarian aid to Bosnia. Therefore, if there were some means to deliver our aid free of charge, the EU should jump on the opportunity: a hundred and twenty million dollars more would go a long way to increase the outreach and the effectiveness of our relief efforts.

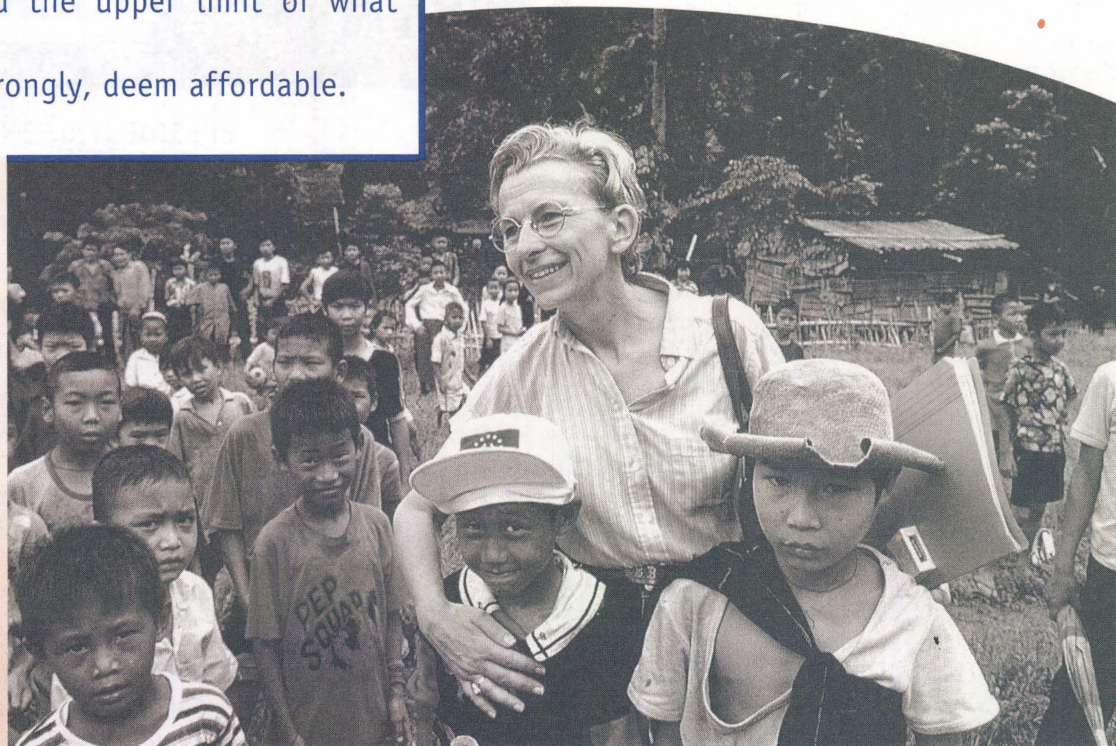


PHOTO CRISTIANO LA RUFFA

A painfully slow process

This opportunity does exist. It has actually been on the table since June 1992, when the Western European Union (WEU) agreed in Petersburg to have a role in executing "humanitarian and rescue tasks". It took the organization quite a long time - three and half years - to translate its pledge in terms of operational concepts and principles, modes of operations, chains of command, and assets to be made available by member States to a WEU "humanitarian task force". From this painfully slow process one thing became clear: that although the task force is intended to answer assistance calls originating from a variety of bodies - including the UN Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe - a "leading role" is foreseen for the EU. In other words, the WEU sees its humanitarian task force as primarily geared to the support of EU missions. Then came, in early June of this year, the Berlin North Atlantic Council, which is worth mentioning here only because it increased the WEU potential in the humanitarian field, thanks to the future release of NATO assets for WEU-led operations, including humanitarian operations.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that the term "humanitarian operation" in WEU parlance has a rather broad meaning: in fact, it includes military missions proper, such as the deployment of armed units to provide protection and security to both refugees and relief workers in areas of conflict. As the new crisis of Autumn 1996 in the Great Lakes region has abundantly shown, this kind of missions may be of vital importance. So why limiting - at least for the time being - a WEU contribution to EU humanitarian undertakings to, essentially, logistical tasks?



MORGAN STEVE

Objections to the military role

There are two main reasons for this. First, to bring to bear WEU armed units in the context of EU relief operations could be seen as moving from the "soft" security policies presently allowed by the Maastricht Treaty to the "hard" defense policies - which will come only "in time". Such a perception, in turn, could also prejudge what the Inter-Governmental Conference may decide to come up with in this field, including the thorny issue of the institutional links between the EU and the WEU. Britain, for example, is known to favour the current status quo and would probably oppose any such move vigorously. On the other hand, the British government has played a leading role within the WEU to give substance to the Petersburg pledge on humanitarian tasks - perhaps as a counterweight to other members' sharper defense ambitions. Whatever the reasons might have been, though, it is a fact that London strongly supports the idea of a WEU humanitarian task force that, among other things, would provide "specialized logistic assets such as transport, engineering and communications", as well as "sealift/airlift to carry humanitarian supplies or air drops". This much, then, seems definitely to be politically uncontroversial.

Another objection against a large military role for the WEU comes from relief workers. The EU practically does not provide any direct humanitarian aid; to implement its programs on the field, it rather makes use of UN agencies, the Red Cross and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). All these consider essential that the provision of aid be perceived in recipient countries as neutral and apolitical. The mandate of ECHO, which operates under my responsibility, shares this goal. And although security is often a problem, if not the problem, in many a conflict area, one has to recognize that the presence of armed troops from the donor countries may clash with their ambition to stay neutral.

These are all good reasons, I believe, to now limit the role of the WEU in ECHO-sponsored humanitarian operations essentially to transport, engineering (such as de-mining) and, possibly communications. To put it differently, I do not see why anybody should object to having relief goods delivered to the ports of entry of recipients by a military cargo rather than by a civilian one - provided, then, that agencies and NGOs continue to be in charge of the distribution of aid within the country concerned.

Who would pay for this logistic support? Well, I hope WEU member states from their defense budgets. This would evidently free those \$120 million of ECHO resources currently tied to transportation tasks. But even if this were not to be the case, and the WEU insisted to claim some refunding, the idea would still be worth being pursued. First, rather than going to the private sector, often outside the Union, this money could at least alleviate the public finances of several deficit-prone WEU member states. And second, it would in any case contribute to raise the profile of Europe's institutions and their capability to act together in a manner acceptable to all, and for aims shared by all. Four years have already gone by since the Petersburg pledge. Is it not enough? How long should we still wait to fulfil that pledge?

HUMANITARIAN AID challenges and expectations



By Agostinho Jardim Gonçalves

PRESIDENT OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE OF
DEVELOPMENT NGOS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

The ECHO-sponsored
Humanitarian Summit last
December in Madrid
brought together
representatives of the 10
institutions that are the
most active and boast
the most experience in the
realm of humanitarian aid.

The Summit meeting in Madrid turned out to be a focal point for reflecting upon and affirming principles and recommendations making a specific impact on public opinion. It also proved to be an open forum for probing issues way up high on the international humanitarian agenda and determining priority concerns to be reflected in the quest for answers and in the implementation of programmes.

Twelve months on, it is still too early to say what meaningful results the Madrid Summit has produced. Nonetheless, I believe it would be worthwhile at this point to make one or two observations. They draw their inspiration from the Summit goals to some extent, but are primarily dictated by the day-to-day experiences of NGOs active on the emergency aid and development fronts.



The continuum

It is becoming increasingly evident just how impossible it is to forecast with any accuracy how often disasters will strike or crises will flare up after a period of fragile peace. Consequently, humanitarian NGOs find themselves compelled to switch from emergency to rehabilitation mode, indeed even development mode, thus crossing the dividing lines of a rigid system of compartmentalisation. Against this background, it is hoped that the intensification of what is called the emergency, rehabilitation, development continuum will result in coherent, practical conclusions. This initiative that has long been mooted by the European Commission would help prevent interruptions in the pace of the activities and the irreparable loss of energy and resources.

NGOs better involved

Humanitarian NGOs are making increasingly sound assessments of the emergency situations in which they find themselves. These in turn allow them to pinpoint the causes of crises: what makes them flare up and what allows them to continue unabated. The causes continue to exist after emergency humanitarian aid programmes have been completed.

The aid operation is not effective if the recipient is not also given recognition, and involved as a player in future programmes of action to overcome the causes of the crises.

Sharing experiences

It should also be borne in mind that the humanitarian activities carried out by the myriad associations and organisations throughout the world have succeeded in producing a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. In a drive to ensure these assets are shared out more amongst the key humanitarian cooperation players, it is vital to lend support to campaigns for gathering and systematising information at local level and channelling it into international fora. These are but a sample of the concerns and proposals that the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the European Union is planning to present at the humanitarian aid ethics forum that ECHO is lending support to and organising in cooperation with Voice, in Dublin on December 9/10, 1996.

Arming ourselves to death

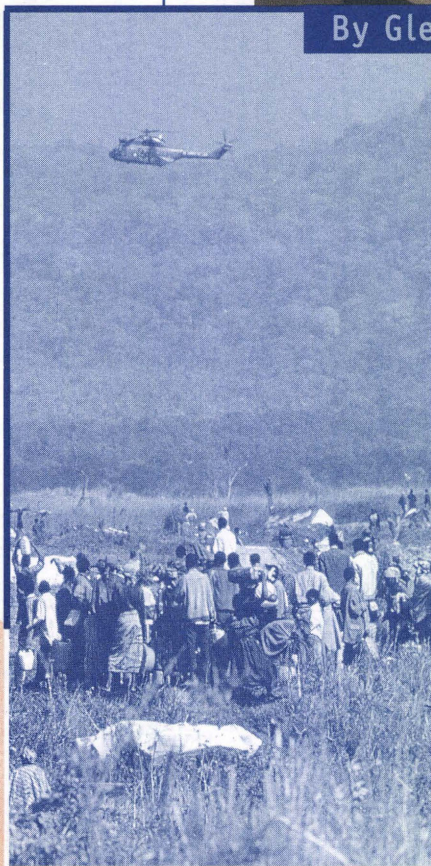
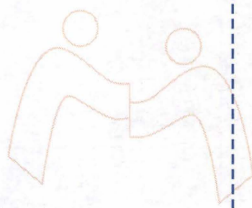


By Glenys Kinnock

MEMBER OF THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Industrialised countries devote over \$500 billion annually to the military but only approximately \$50 billion to development aid. Whilst the notion of the peace dividend as an instant cheque through the post was always misplaced, there are hard headed decisions to be made about what will in fact give the best value for money in promoting genuine long term development.

We have a choice about whether we focus on the development work that tackles the poverty and inequality at the root of so many conflicts, or whether we provide the military force which can be used to contain conflict. The fact is that today's military budgets remain as high as they were in the late 1970's and there has in fact been an increase in resources for military research and development.



GAMMA



By Glenys Kinnock

In the developing world, there are eight times as many soldiers as there are doctors. UNICEF tells us that Governments in the South spend half their annual expenditure on serving debt and on the military. The WHO spent 21 years working towards the eradication of smallpox - the cost of waging this battle was the same as the world spends on arms in one hour of every day of every year. In practical terms it is a waste of scientific skills, of scarce foreign currency and fans the flames of conflict.

Humanitarian aid is no substitute for action

Serious consideration of Conflict Prevention now should heed the words of Commissioner Bonino when she said "Determination is now required to take whatever resolute and decisive action may be necessary to resolve crisis situations and not to use humanitarian aid as a substitute for action".

The EU bears a heavy responsibility through ECHO to try to pick up the pieces, the shattered lives when a conflict has occurred. In 1994, the Union provided 764 millions of ECU in humanitarian assistance - 25% went to Rwanda where a crisis could have been averted.

What we need now is a framework for a Code of Conduct for the European arms industry. We need practical measures

which ensure a more principled approach to arms export policies and the lead up to the Intergovernmental Conference provides an opportunity to ensure that the need to establish an effective EU arms control regime is prioritised in the EU's evolving security agenda. The Government of the Netherlands has indeed given a clear indication that the development of conflict prevention measures will be a priority during its Presidency. The Dutch, Germans and Irish Governments have all given support in the past to the need for strengthened export controls. The Swedes and a future Labour Government (already committed to a Code of Conduct) would add the necessary weight to the arguments for an initiative at Council level. Such a Code of Conduct has been given clear support in a Resolution passed by the European Parliament. The criteria laid down in the Code would stress that weapons exports should take into account such factors as the internal and regional stability of recipient states, the human rights record and the effect of weapons purchases on the economy of the recipient state.

The Intergovernmental Conference could provide the opportunity to develop the necessary instruments which are needed to implement preventative diplomacy measures. This would represent a significant move in the direction of harmonised European control. Simply mouthing an interest in preventative diplomacy will not make a jot of difference if at the same time Member States grant

export licences for weapons to repressive regimes. In spite of an EU agreement in 1993, Britain continued to sell arms to Nigeria right up to the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni activists. Other Member States are equally guilty of arms sales which only fuel the flames of war. The lunacy of it all defies description at a time when real security - common security - is within our grasp.

The reality is that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are the five major arms suppliers in the world. It is time they took stock of the situation and realised that the world needs a new preventative approach, a new long term approach, - a determination to concentrate on human resources and environmental sustainability. Now that we are released from the constraints of the Cold War, Band Aids are not an option and neither is continuing to arm the world to death. We share a common future, and a common interest to protect present and future generations from the folly and misery of war. All that is required is the political will and the leadership which believes that peace and real security are within our grasp.



GAMMA

GAMMA

Promoting security preventing conflicts

By Bernard Kouchner

MEMBER OF
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PRESIDENT OF THE
DEVELOPMENT AND
COOPERATION COMMISSION



Our purpose in gathering in Madrid, December 1995, was to take the opportunity to consider what the future has in store for our activities and examine the values underpinning them. It was also the occasion for asking a very important question: what action is the international community taking to promote peace between and within nations?

What peace-keeping systems are actually being applied and what proposals do we ourselves have to offer? It is absolutely vital for us to act and to devise civilised international systems. We need to discover common values with which to build up collective systems. If we fail in our endeavour, there will be nothing else to do for a long time to come but to carry on trying to relieve the suffering and desolation brought about by war.

GAMMA / OUEST FRANCE



A political failure

Humanitarian aid workers and political leaders have to try to discover answers long before the blood begins to flow, before malnutrition and disease take their dreadful toll. Our first task is to discover a response to the anxieties of men and women, to find systems and put them into practice before it is too late.

Lasting peace is acceptable and beneficial only if it is shared by all, irrespective of colour, religion or ideology. And this goal may be achieved only through international cooperation that is premised on the principles of justice, solidarity and reciprocity. This is tantamount to the right to intervene, or, if that sounds too drastic, the right to prevent conflicts, to protect minorities.

Civil wars are raging on all sides, in Afghanistan, Sudan, Sri Lanka, to mention just a few.

The international community is honour-bound, as are we, to treat the need to protect citizens and guarantee their safety in all respects as a vitally important challenge.

The "humanitarian spirit" can hope to attain its goal only if we strive together to get the following straightforward yet fundamental concepts accepted by all major international agencies, by all political leaders and all decision-makers:

- All people, even more so than states, have the right to a peaceful existence, and all states are honour-bound to protect their citizens. This is our vision of the sovereignty of all people.
- The primary goal of any new policy to promote international security should be to prevent conflicts and war and eradicate all economic, social, environmental, political and military threats. It is also to anticipate and avoid any worsening of crisis situations in the making.
- Military force should never be used as a coercive policy instrument, except of course under the auspices of the United Nations and to protect the most vulnerable. The military capability of states should not be developed at the expense of the well-being of citizens and minorities
- Arms production has to be kept under the scrutiny of the international community.

If these principles were to be put into practice, a huge leap forward could be achieved under the banner of a new form of humanism.

However, it is imperative that the right to intervene is at last acknowledged, the right to tell dictators they are going too far, that no-one is entitled to slaughter at will. Action has to be taken before people are killed, wounded or displaced. It is a matter for deep regret each time the Rubicon is crossed, and the United Nations finally decides to launch an international operation. Hence the need to pay more attention to NGOs when they report that a situation is very near to boiling point. What is needed then is to act at speedily, to establish a system that well able to coordinate all the cries for help, and to weigh up all the political, economic, military, demographic, agricultural and climate-related factors. Apart from measuring the scale of the crises, the structure could be called upon to draw the media's attention and to act as a pressure group.

A bold stance

Let us adopt a bold stance: a preventive approach would, in the final analysis, prove to be less costly than the present very expensive one. If we had been able to step in at the right moment in Angola or in Somalia, think how many deaths, how much misery, how many broken lives and how many millions of dollars would have been spared. These enormous sums of money could have been channelled into development, economies, healthcare, food aid or debt-reduction programmes for these countries.

Why should such little heed be paid to development policy, when, if it is effectively applied, it acts as guarantee that fragile societies in many countries will not slide into chaos. It continues to act as a defence against outbreaks of violence and the rise of nationalism.

GAMMA / MORGAN STEVE





P. MONTIZIS

Anxiety, progress and hope

By Sadako Ogata

UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES

For UNHCR, the recent year has been increasingly — and paradoxically — sad, rewarding, stressful and motivating.

There have been positive developments. There have also been big worries.

The worst anxiety is undoubtedly the situation in the Great Lakes.

Never before has UNHCR found its humanitarian concerns in the midst of such a lethal quagmire of political and security issues.

The dangerous security implications of the presence of 1.7 million Rwandan and Burundi refugees in the region have now escalated.

Total chaos in the Great Lakes

For two years, we tried everything possible, both in Rwanda and in the asylum countries, to encourage the Rwandan refugees to return home. But most of them were prevented from returning, by the militants in the camps or because they lacked confidence in developments in Rwanda. Now the entire region has descended into chaos. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have had to flee their camps in panic. Local villagers have been forced out of their homes and communities onto the road. UNHCR and other humanitarian staff have been put in danger and forced to evacuate. The ethnic antagonism in Rwanda and Burundi has engulfed eastern Zaire.



PHOTO NEWS

This alarming crisis is the culmination of the gradual deterioration of a problem whose root causes have always been essentially political. As I have repeatedly argued, humanitarian responses cannot solve political problems. And if they are not addressed in time, the end result may be more chaos, more refugees, and more suffering.

Another of our worries is Bosnia. True, the guns have fallen silent after four years of fighting, and this is a tremendous achievement. A year has passed since the signing of the Dayton agreement and I am happy to see that the benefits of peace are taking root. People are rebuilding their houses, plowing their fields and clearing rubble. A sense of normality is reappearing in many places. But, in spite of many positive developments in Bosnia, the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Accord of November 1995 has in many respects been disappointing.

Bosnia : minority groups still harassed

We have known since the beginning that our job in organizing the return of 2.1 million refugees and displaced persons would be a difficult one. But political obstruction, the level of popular fear and hostility, and the practical obstacles of house destruction and occupation are even worse than anticipated. So far, only 240,000 persons have returned to their homes — virtually all to areas where their community is in the majority. Bosnia is still divided. Only a small number of Muslims are being allowed to work to repair their houses on the Serb side. Worse still, there have been new cases of evictions and harassment of minority groups.

Nevertheless, we must not give up on the right of people to return to their homes.

I firmly believe that we must continue to build bridges between the people of Bosnia.

A roof over their heads

Many Bosnian refugees and displaced persons would go back to their majority areas if they had at least a roof over their heads. In these areas, the main obstacle to their return is not security, but the high level of destruction. With the impressive support of the European Commission, and of ECHO in particular, UNHCR has been very active in the repair of housing, through our own shelter project and by initiating the concept of target areas for reconstruction and return. But this is not enough. So far, the international community has not yet delivered on all its intentions. Although reconstruction works are finally gathering pace in some areas of Bosnia, much more needs to be done. There is not enough reconstruction underway to enable refugees and displaced persons to go back home.

As conditions in Bosnia improve further — and the forthcoming municipal elections should be an important indicator — the time will come for the lifting of temporary protection of the Bosnian refugees who have been generously received in many countries, especially in Europe. However, I would urge that those unable to return to their home areas should not be pushed back, as long as they will not have a decent roof over their head, or a decent alternative solution in sight.

Reconciliation : greater challenge than separating armies

Bosnia and Rwanda demonstrate that the establishment of military peace is insufficient in societies which emerge deeply divided from fierce communal conflict. There the establishment of civilian peace, of reconciliation in the broad sense, becomes a still greater challenge than separating armies or physical reconstruction. It requires at least a minimum consensus on the future make-up of society - which cannot be imposed from the outside, and a fair balance between the often competing demands of peace and justice, of forgiveness and ending impunity. It requires just and humane solutions for those who were deliberately chased away in order to establish ethnic hegemony or territorial control. Whereas in almost all situations of conflict solutions for refugee problems require some form of peace, the reverse is often equally true: humane solutions are essential for peace.



Progress and hope

Sometimes all of us are beset by scepticism and helplessness. How on earth can one heal the wounds of large-scale murder and expulsion? I want to be optimistic. The difficulties in Bosnia and Rwanda should not obscure the historic progress made in resolving forced displacement elsewhere. In Mozambique, in spite of seventeen years of atrocious conflict, the peaceful reintegration of 1.7 million refugees has happened and it has worked; in July this year we were able to end our involvement there. In Mali, where the ethnic dimension of conflict did not preclude reconciliation, we helped some 50,000 Tuareg refugees to repatriate this year. We are trying to help more refugees to go home in Somalia, in addition to the estimated 500,000 Somalis who have repatriated in the last few years. In Angola, in spite of the slow

progress in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, some 30,000 refugees have returned spontaneously and we are gearing up our capacity for larger movements in future. We were able this year to terminate our presence in Chili, and thus turned one of the saddest pages in the history of UNHCR.

So there is hope — hope that is important for me, my staff and our many humanitarian partners. Refugee problems are less insoluble than they often appear to be. However, in most cases, solving them requires time.

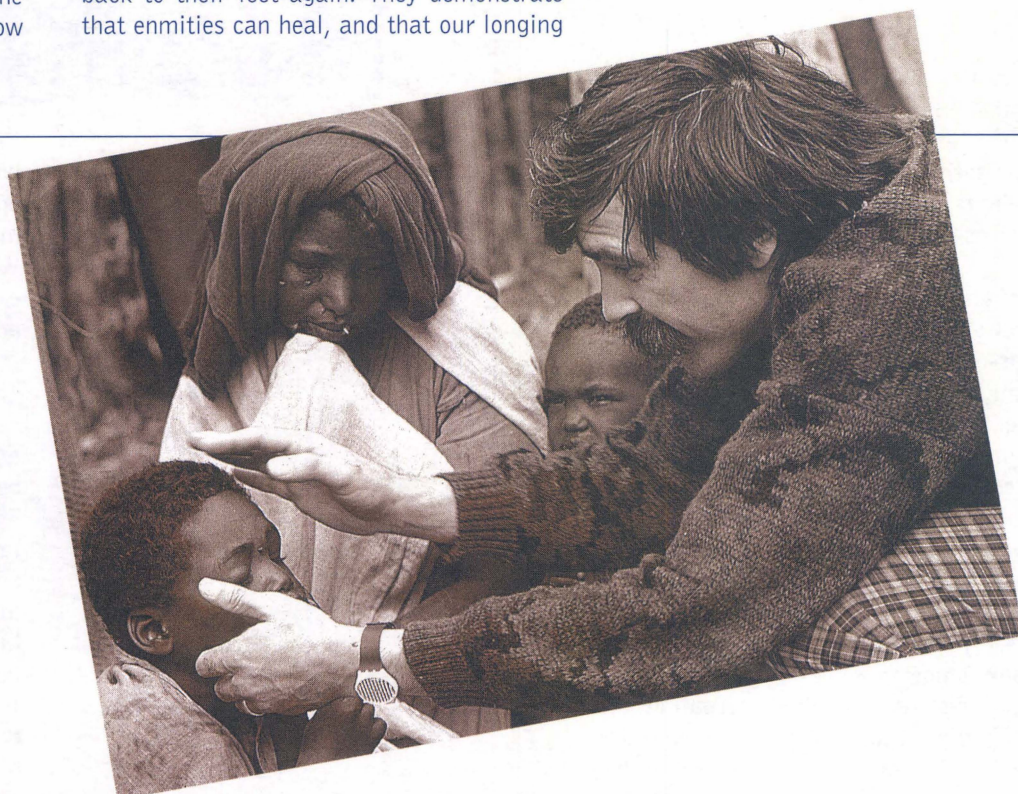
Throughout history, people have demonstrated their resilience. Cambodia, South Africa and many countries in Latin America are some of examples that show that societies - some faster, some slower - can get back to their feet again. They demonstrate that enmities can heal, and that our longing

for peace is in the end much stronger than any possible inclination for evil. If we are unable or unwilling to stop the most terrible conflicts, we should at least help to give peace a chance, to prevent their re-occurrence. Peace cannot be imposed from the outside. But it can, and should, be assisted. International cooperation and involvement are indispensable to solving problems of forced displacement, and their terrible toll in terms of human suffering. I am extremely grateful for ECHO's cooperation and major financial support. ECHO is more than a donor for us: it is a partner on whom we feel we can rely. That partnership and support is indispensable for the 26 million refugees, returnees, internally displaced and others whom my Office tries to protect and assist across the globe.

Humanitarian relief is more than a series of haulage operations

Dr Jean-Baptiste Richardier

CO-FOUNDER OF HANDICAP
INTERNATIONAL
CO-DIRECTOR
OF ACTION NORD-SUD



Rehabilitation is the leitmotif of emergency aid programmes. Human dignity, resourcefulness and self-determination are brought out in full by major disasters. This is the pattern into which emergency programmes must fit.

The humanitarian response to differing types of emergency situations require careful examination. Over the last few years, some emergency operations have been seen to wander in the logistical sense. All people demand well organised and clearly costed interventions as the media and public opinion can turn against such operations if they are not transparent.

The struggle for a long term view

Admittedly, the key governmental and non-governmental players are striving to overcome the perennial divisions between crisis and development situations, which are in fact inextricably linked by complex cause and effect relationships. Each side recognises that the best "vaccination" against crisis situations is effective development on a long-term basis. Experience has taught us that in many countries, the inhabitants have to "develop" in "chronically urgent" situations, which in many instances last for more than 10 years. In an ever-increasing number of cases, the most urgent need is to maintain development as a guard against fresh tragedies.

Who is helping who ?

Large-scale emergency aid operations do have their limits and they can produce undesired effects (aid-dependency, further destabilisation, corruption). In addition to these limits, there are three risks inherent in the purpose of a humanitarian action.

First of all there is the risk of a commitment inspired by over-simplistic empathy or "hands-off colonialism". Etymologically speaking, intervene means to "come between". This therefore raises the questions of how to manage an intervention in close contact with the beneficiaries, and at the same time succeed in keeping some distance. There is a risk of adopting an arbitrary position, of being able to cope with the good and the bad, with our support for a supposedly just cause taking precedence over our competence.

There is also a risk of exacerbating the breach in the social dialogue. Aid operations seek to anticipate demands reflecting the needs of beneficiaries. To some extent, the assistance can further weaken fragile links between the State and its citizens owing to two deficiencies: action controlled by the State do not always reflect the real needs, and action initiated by outsiders can also miss its mark. The risk of acting in the stead of others may be tolerated in extreme crises, but social and political setups should be taken into account as soon as possible so as to prevent the social framework from being damaged.

Lastly, there is a risk of losing a sense of purpose. It is not taking an overly starry-eyed view to say that citizens of poorer nations have managed to retain their social ties in the face of adversity. In Western societies, the development of exclusion and individualism, and the breakdown of the social contract has led us to conceive humanitarian aid in terms of keeping crises at a distance: humanitarian aid as seen through the media is often seen as little more than relief operations, large scale road convoys or air lifts, where the victims have no value as human beings but only in terms of the help they receive. No thought is given to their past and future, let alone the need to have a humanitarian commitment towards them.

Comforting view of the world

As a result, there is a serious risk of spreading the comforting view of the world which leads us to believe the "humanitarian" project is bound to triumph in the end. Meanwhile, only low-key actions are taken. Yet the media-friendly "better than nothing" remains. A sense of fatalism or indifference then sets in that obscures the images we see of our world. More seriously still, there is the risk of leaving the field clear for the sorts of aberrations seen recently where so-called "humanitarian" action becomes blurred with political action.



GAMMA / NOËL QUIDOU

We have to join forces, yet each acting in his or her own specialist field, to prevent aid operations from covering human suffering and misery with the modesty piece of charity. We have to do our utmost to build upon what exists, by preserving the meaning of our actions.

This aspiration may be summed up as a never-ending quest for an alliance, a project and a source of mutual identification between the helper and the one being helped. This attitude acts as guarantee for each protagonists to think, to experience and to exist as a subject. Consequently, humanitarian aid may take the form of action that seeks to tap into local know-how and benefit from the involvement of those for whom it is meant. A better balance will be struck in the context of a two-way dialogue. The genuine bond of fellowship makes a distinction between partners in an alliance, and a bond which has to be discovered and developed over and over again.



What future for humanitarian aid ?

By Francisca Sauquillo

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



The constantly changing concept of humanitarian aid needs periodical updating. Hence this article, recalling a report on the Madrid Summit, bears, as with Borges' circular mazes, the same title as the Madrid Summit: what future for humanitarian aid ? There is very little mystery about what the future holds in store for humanitarian aid, but its criteria nonetheless need to be determined as meticulously as possible.

Humanitarian aid was interpreted at Madrid as representing a "summa politica". As a system able to cater for the whole spectrum of individual, collective and social needs that emerge in times of crisis. A call went out to world leaders to press the need to provide the "funds needed to meet the challenge of reconstructing societies destroyed by the war and to build upon the peaceful agreements, so as to be able to eliminate the seeds of future conflicts". The text then goes on to describe practical spheres of action for social, economic and administrative reconstruction.

Broadening concept of humanitarian aid

Looked at through the prism of a shifting reality in all its myriad and complicated forms, humanitarian aid, in the final analysis, now covers a wide range of activities, starting with prevention and ending with the reconstruction process after all sides have laid down their arms. Emergency action is indeed at the root of the humanitarian aid concept, but its actual scope far transcends this fundamental idea. Hitherto, humanitarian aid has been conceived on a temporary basis and this applies both to the moment chosen to put it into action and the length of time it continues. Action has been held to be justified in the midst of a humanitarian crisis (due to a natural disaster or an armed conflict) and immediately afterwards (to provide relief to the casualties of the crisis). We now find ourselves faced with structural crises requiring a never-ending provision of humanitarian aid, which puts a big question mark over the urgent dimension. We are also confronted with the possibility of contemplating disaster prevention as part of the range of aid activities. These questions assume key importance in terms of defining and, more importantly, providing a framework for humanitarian aid.

Confidence-building exercises

The word prevention generally conjures up images of political initiatives, such as confidence-building exercises or seeking to mediate between warring factions, often by dispatching buffer forces. Or it calls to mind development policy schemes, such as peace education, training in human rights issues, and cooperation in administrative and institutional reforms. Although these examples are all related in some way to armed conflicts, prevention may also cover natural disasters and the need for such things as environmental protection, infrastructure rehabilitation and training for populations under threat.

In the case of humanitarian aid awarded by the European Community, political considerations automatically lead to changes in decision-making systems and the inclusion of measures inspired by government-to-government cooperation, so that what was once a Community area of business ends up being placed (or not placed and therein lies the rub) under the common foreign and security policy heading. As for development policy, in addition to the sharp distinction some observers make, with doubtful justification, between emergency aid and cooperation, there are other aspects of this concept that make it effectively untouchable. This is not to say, however, that emergency aid and development cooperation are mutually exclusive.

Summit meetings are occasions for top officials and key players to concentrate their minds, amidst much enthusiasm and fiery eloquence, on a particular sphere of activity. The heat generated by the debates often cools, however, when the time comes to match words with deeds. Humanitarian aid, the sphere of activity in question here, is structured like a highly complex system of policy-making. This is a result of the human and material resources deployed, the confrontational situations in which it is used and the political background against which it unfolds.

Against this background, there is a need to determine where exactly prevention fits into the crisis management maze, not only in the future, but right now. The European Parliament (EP) has floated an initiative along these lines, referring to the "preparation" for crisis. The Parliamentary recommendation reflects the increasing difficulty in mustering support from donors, as the first and only resort in time of crisis, who tend to become daunted by the scale of the tragedies or more and more desensitised to the emotional appeal of certain images. In the final analysis, shying away from any reference to prevention, so as not to stray outside the framework of regulations and treaties, is tantamount to emulating the famous 17th century explorer, Tasman, who discovered Tasmania and passed Australia by.

Humanitarian aid and development

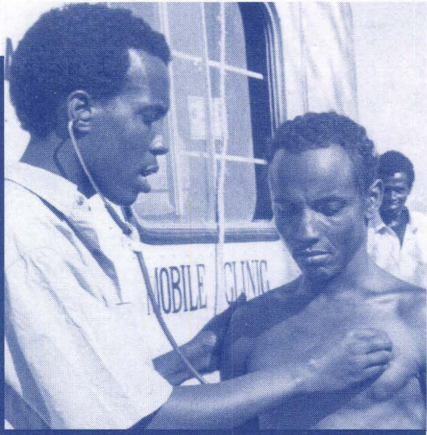
On the development front, it is universally agreed that most disasters fit into a context of underdevelopment. Hence the need for aid and cooperation projects to be brought together more effectively so as to ensure the "continuum concept is expressed in a way that transcends mere coordination.

Humanitarian aid is put to work in the light of a theoretical analysis of the situation. But the limits of this analytical framework are exceeded as soon as the ultimate goal is contemplated: saving human lives. A collective dimension is then added to what was originally thought to be an individual line of action, because NGOs know only too well how impossible it is to remain aloof from a social reconstruction drive in the midst of a full-blown humanitarian aid effort. Running a centre for refugees or orphans, for example, also involves helping to enhance the social inclusion of the people concerned.

The social complications caused by these crises call for answers that are no less convoluted, so social reconstruction schemes for the casualties of disasters need to be included high on the list of humanitarian aid priorities.

The preceding is a summary of some of the thoughts inspired by a reading of the Madrid Summit declaration, where the sole aim involved is to make a constructive contribution to the humanitarian aid debate. Now that humanitarian relief is universally recognised as filling a useful purpose, the task of those involved in these sorts of aid operations is to make them as effective as possible. We have to maximise benefits, minimise costs and boost efficiency, so that

humanitarian aid can be put to work and made to work in real circumstances.



KIVU: a foreseeable humanitarian disaster

By Doris Schopper

PRESIDENT
MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES

During the Madrid Summit, almost one year ago, I spoke of the difficult situation in Rwanda. Médecins Sans Frontières had witnessed and denounced the unforgivable slaughter in Kibeho and a few months later was expelled from certain districts in which the organisation was operating. I referred to the situation in Burundi which was getting worse with each passing day, leaving civilians defenceless in the face of the merciless process of ethnic cleansing and systematic massacres.

We made a call for all countries, or at the very least the European Union Member States, to forge a joint position on the conflict, to bring pressure to bear on the warring factions and take steps to develop a long-term solution. We urged the European Union, which took the initiative to organise the Humanitarian Summit, to ensure that meaningful action was taken to guarantee the safety of the civilians and their unimpeded access to humanitarian aid.

12 months on, the picture is a very sombre one. Since the start of the year, 7,500 people have been assassinated in Burundi, and half a million Burundians are displaced within their own country. In June, three ICRC delegates were murdered in the north-eastern part of the country. The principle of impartial humanitarian aid operations is going unheeded and the scope for humanitarian relief work is shrinking to nothing. Médecins Sans Frontières launched an appeal last August to urge the key political players in Burundi and international agencies to guarantee protection for civilians and denounce the embargo on humanitarian aid supplies. The situation is now so dire in Burundi, that it is impossible to contemplate a return of the hundred of thousands of refugees, most of whom are in Zaire, caught up in another conflict.

Call for international military intervention

Beyond Burundi, Zaire's entire border region, Kivu, is in state of conflict. Now, early in November 1996, two years after the genocide of at least half a million Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus and the flight of more than one million Rwandan Hutus to Zaire and Tanzania, we find ourselves powerless to act in the face of a humanitarian disaster - one

that was foreseeable. Those responsible for the genocide have still not been brought to trial, the safety of Hutu refugees wishing to return home is still not guaranteed and in the Kivu region, old conflicts are being revived by the arrival of huge numbers of refugees. This summer, the ethnic cleansing of Tutsis who have lived in eastern Zaire for generations, went unnoticed. Against this background, Banyamulenge rebels and Zairean troops have been locked in an armed conflict for several weeks now. Humanitarian aid agencies have in the end been forced to withdraw, leaving more than one million refugees and the local Zairean population without any aid or protection. The urgent need for humanitarian relief could not be more obvious: hundreds of thousands of people are homeless, without food, drinking water and medical care in a region where the rainy season has just begun and cholera is endemic. The experience with the Goma camps in 1994 should serve as a grim reminder of the disastrous consequences of a large concentration of people. For the first time in the history of our organisation, the scale of the human drama unfolding out of sight of the television cameras has stung us into making a call for international military intervention to create safe areas and guarantee access to the civilian population. Humanitarian relief is not enough, however. The opportunity has to be seized to disarm the perpetrators of the genocide who are present in the camps and bring them to trial. At the same time, all the conditions have to be met to ensure the Hutu refugees may return home without fearing for their safety.

Now, during this period of intense crisis, is the time to learn from the lessons of the past. The international community has to display the same level of commitment to the negotiations and the search for lasting solutions for the Great Lakes region, as it did so very recently in the case of the former Yugoslavia and the Near East.



UNHCR

GAMMA / PETERSON

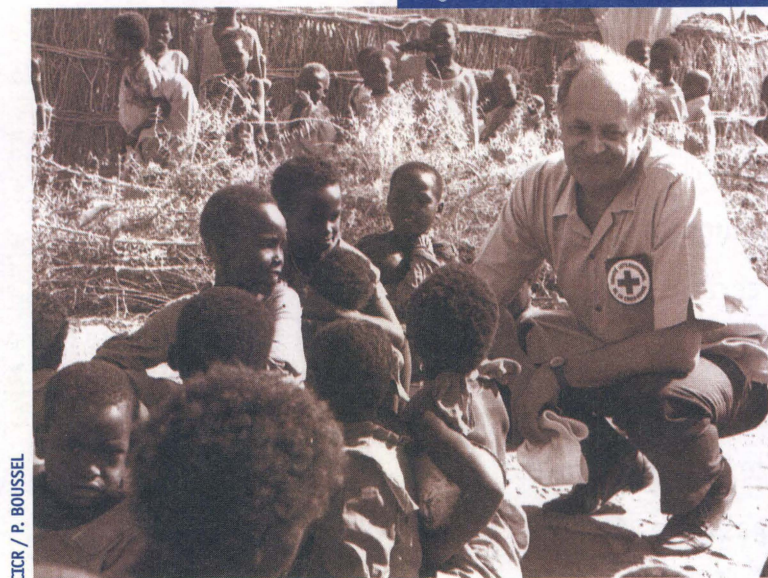


PHOTO GILLES SIMOND

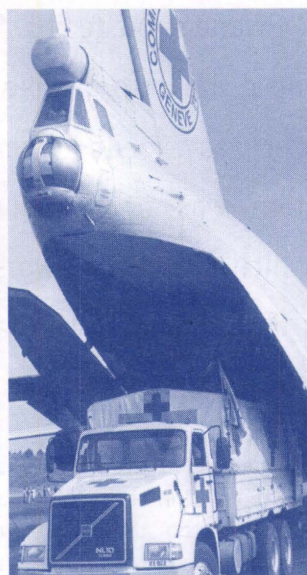
Humanitarian workers or front line observers shaping up the future

By Cornelio Sommaruga

PRESIDENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)



CICR / P. BOUSSEL



CICR / P. FULLER

Humanitarian workers find themselves faced with an increasingly painful dilemma. They assert the need for their activities to continue to be apolitical, neutral and independent and say they should seek only to relieve the suffering of the casualties of conflicts or natural disasters. In other words, they aspire to be contemporary versions of the knights of yore, dispensing charity without seeking to create more justice or attack the roots of conflicts, as these matters belong to the political realm.

the humanitarian alibi

At the same time, they insist upon the need to remain independent and rail against politicians who contrive to use humanitarian aid efforts as a tool either for deflecting operations from their original purposes, or for justifying political inaction.

The "humanitarian alibi" routinely comes under fire.

However, humanitarian workers continue to appeal to politicians. Not for the latter to stand in for the former but to urge governments to take action to deal with the major problems that are beyond the scope of humanitarian action. These problems come more appropriately under the heading of preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and the need to deal with the often myriad and convoluted causes that induce groups of human beings to attack each other.

Unfortunately, these appeals are often incantations. For want of something better, they are addressed to what is after all an abstract entity: the international community. These appeals only too often fall upon deaf ears. That is, until the media decides to

Exactly 12 months ago, a "Humanitarian Summit" was staged in Madrid at the instigation of Commissioner Emma Bonino. It brought together officials from some of the leading humanitarian organisations and their two main donors, the European Union and the United States. The last two lines of the Summit declaration read as follows: "Government and leaders have to recognise that in an increasingly interdependent world, each nation's key aims of worldwide peace and security can be achieved only by concerted international action".

A grim picture

Humanitarian workers are now pre-eminent observers of what the future holds in store for us. Even when their remit or scope for action is limited, they are unable to ignore certain deep-seated tendencies already at work. Tendencies that are fraught with danger and will help to shape the international course of events in the coming decades.

echo and amplify the calls and thus help sting the public into reacting because the enormity of the tragedies are impossible to ignore. In almost every case, humanitarian action is required because the early warning systems have failed to elicit an early response. Humanitarian efforts are borne of failure.

Presumably, it is best to remain realistic and not expect politicians to stir themselves too much as long as they feel their vital interests are not under threat. Although this realistic attitude is quite appropriate given the circumstances, it is certainly nothing to rejoice about.

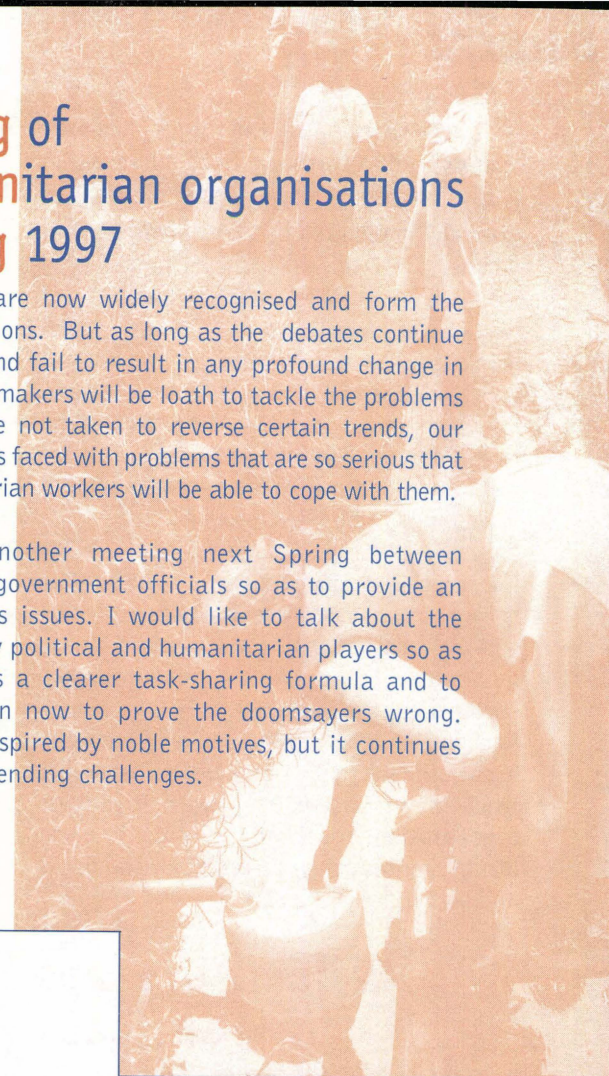
By the dawn of the 21st century there will be six billion people on earth, 20% of whom will have no more than one Euro a day to live on. As a reflection of the ever-increasing social divisions in the wealthy nations, it is becoming increasingly apparent that whole sections of humanity are going to be left by

the wayside, without any prospects for them and their children. They will be denied the right to a good education and adequate healthcare. We are already witnessing a return of major pandemics. Towns are becoming megapolis where people from the countryside arrive to seek their fortunes. Such are the constraints to which the biosphere is subject that the worst-case scenarios have to be contemplated. The disfigurement of the environment, an unequal distribution of resources, overexploitation of fossil fuels, demographic and social woes - these will inevitably spark off conflicts, huge movements of people and global tensions. The availability of drinking water will be one of the major strategic challenges of the next century. The Internet will leave a majority of human beings "Extranet", to quote Mandela. At the same time, crises of identity will emerge to threaten the unity of humankind, in reaction to the globalisation of trade and information.

New meeting of humanitarian organisations in Spring 1997

These and many other problems are now widely recognised and form the subject of numerous public discussions. But as long as the debates continue to be sector-specific and partial and fail to result in any profound change in public consciousness, the decision-makers will be loath to tackle the problems in earnest. If immediate steps are not taken to reverse certain trends, our children are likely to find themselves faced with problems that are so serious that not even whole armies of humanitarian workers will be able to cope with them.

I am planning to organise another meeting next Spring between humanitarian organisations and government officials so as to provide an opportunity to moot these various issues. I would like to talk about the complementarity natures of the key political and humanitarian players so as to try to move some way towards a clearer task-sharing formula and to consider what action can be taken now to prove the doomsayers wrong. Humanitarian action is vital and inspired by noble motives, but it continues to be an inadequate reply to the impending challenges.



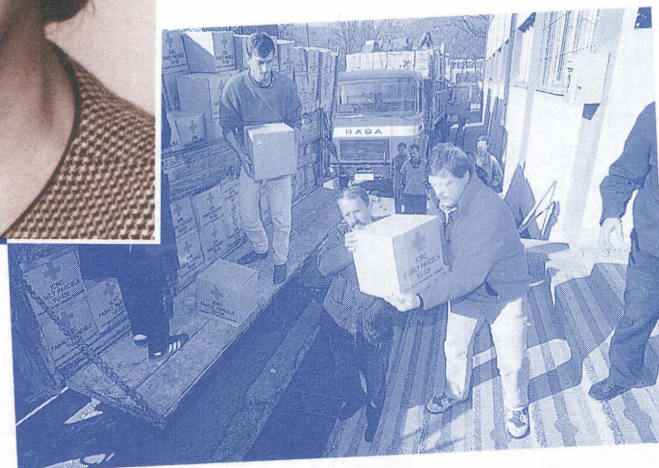
By Julia Taft

PH. PERRET / DE VISU

NGOs and Complex Emergencies: Good intentions are not enough

PRESIDENT &
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
OF INTERACTION

INTERACTION IS THE LARGEST U.S. COALITION OF RELIEF, DEVELOPMENT AND REFUGEE-ASSISTANCE AGENCIES OPERATING IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.



CTCR / P. BOUSSET

Good intentions are not enough when it comes to disaster response. In the past six years, ethnic conflicts have become so brutal — and civilian victims so numerous — that humanitarian emergencies created by war and ethnic strife have become the single most pressing concern of the disaster relief community worldwide.

More organized, better trained

It is not an exaggeration to say that the culture of the disaster relief community must change in the face of these complex emergencies. Our community knows only too well that tens of thousands of innocent civilians can die unnecessarily if disaster responders are not well prepared to meet their needs. Without sacrificing the initiative, courage and adaptability that have been characteristic of the disaster relief community, we all must become more organized, better trained and a lot more cooperative.

As the term complex emergency suggests, man-made disasters have to be addressed in a fashion much more sophisticated than generally is required in dealing with natural disasters. New players with skills not needed before have become essential members of the disaster response community. Socio-economic analytical abilities are as important as knowledge of logistics. Conflict resolution techniques, demining technology, and rape victim counseling are just a few of the other new fields of expertise now needed in the toolkits of disaster responders.

Cooperation among disaster responders has become more imperative at all levels, multinational and national, civilian and military, governmental and nongovernmental, north/south and transatlantic.

Recognizing this, representatives from leading European and U.S. NGOs have met twice in the past eight months to discuss collaborative action, with the initial focus on identifying mutually agreed upon standards and best practices.

Avoiding overlaps and gaps

Disaster victims cannot be left untreated while NGOs all shift resources to anticipate television coverage on CNN. Precious NGO funds should not be consumed in bidding battles for scarce local resources. Incompatible communications nets should not expose NGOs to avoidable security risks.

Funders also must work together to avoid overlap and gaps. Rational divisions of labor will help insure the broadest possible coverage. Information sharing can keep more funds from being wasted on incompetent organizations or siphoned off by unscrupulous predators.

NGOs and military forces likely to be deployed in complex emergencies need a better understanding of each other's cultures, capabilities and limitations. Again, the nature of complex emergencies will have NGOs dealing with military forces of various nationalities, and national military contingents working alongside NGOs from several countries. This means the exchange process should expose NGOs and military officers to foreign as well as domestic interlocutors.

NGOs not alone to upgrade skills

NGOs are not alone in seeing a need to upgrade and expand their skills, as well as to work together more collaboratively. Major public sector funders and private foundations also are focused on these requirements. Some are sponsoring programs to assist NGOs to meet new challenges and to take advantages of new technologies.

Some public sector funders also are changing grant and contract procedures to encourage

collaborative action. At least one major funder has indicated that in the future NGOs are going to have to demonstrate that their field personnel have successfully completed outside training courses in order to receive grants and contracts.

The international organizations engaged in disaster response recognize the need to improve and expand the skills of their own personnel and to work together more harmoniously. Some are willing to train NGO personnel alongside their own and to participate in NGO sponsored training activities.

Improving performance

Many NGOs are engaged in improving performance, collaboration and accountability in disaster response. In the United States, InterAction is building on the work of its members and expects to join forces with initiatives underway in Europe, both at the individual NGO and coalition levels. Here are recent initiatives U.S. NGOs are undertaking to upgrade their ability to meet the needs of disaster victims.

FIELD COOPERATION PROTOCOL: Disaster response agencies have negotiated and signed an NGO Field Cooperation Protocol — the first of its kind for InterAction. Agencies have committed themselves to instructing their field directors at disaster sites to try to reach consensus with their counterparts on how to deal with the potentially contentious issues which can impede an effective NGO response. The issues include such practical problems as salaries for local hires and cooperation on sectoral programs. Many NGOs plan to include the Protocol in briefing materials for field personnel. Some even plan to consider how well directors have worked with their NGO counterparts in performance evaluations. InterAction has briefed Voice, ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies), SCHR (Steering Committee for Human Rights), ACT (Action of Churches Together) and a number of individual European NGOs on the Protocol, inviting them to sign it or suggest desired changes.

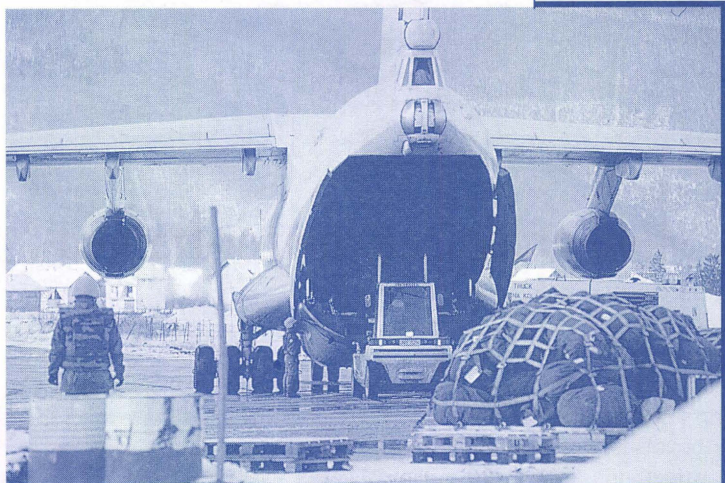
NEW TRAINING CURRICULUM: Our member agencies are developing a curriculum for training NGO personnel in responding to the medical needs of disaster victims. A task force drawn not only from our membership but composed of leading public health educators, the internationally recognized experts, officials of UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization, and specialists from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Public Health Service, plan to have the two week course piloted next April. The curriculum is being designed so that the course can be given abroad as well as in the United States.

BEST PRACTICES INITIATIVE: An InterAction task force has been working to identify the "best practices" which should be employed by agencies in dealing with water, sanitation and food security. In view of the SCHR's decision to embark on a similar process, InterAction has made a tentative decision to drop its independent initiative to work collaboratively with the SCHR on identification of standards and best practices.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOPS: InterAction this fall launched a new initiative to improve our ability to use modern telecommunications and information technologies. This will involve a series of workshops on Internet access, creation of web sites and improvement of interoffice electronic communications. We also will be updating our guide for NGO use of the Internet and creating a disaster response telecommunications working group.

NGO/MILITARY CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM: Finally, we continue to work on improving relations with the U.S. military. Attitudes toward working with the military vary among NGOs, with some of our members unwilling as a matter of principle to engage in any activities. But over the past few years most members of our disaster response community have concluded that association with the military at some disaster response sites is inevitable and that it is in their interest to have a better understanding of what help they can expect from the military and to have military officers better aware of what NGOs expect of them.

These efforts hopefully will lead to a new era for the disaster relief community as a whole. NGOs are known for their high level of commitment and energy. But we also know we cannot act alone. We need all actors, including the United Nations, the European Union and individual donor governments, to join us as energetic partners or ultimately none of us will succeed.



UNHCR



ECHO's global reach

AFGHANISTAN

Wendell Kari/Contrast

The burqa is now compulsory, even for foreign women

Aid hit by ban on women workers

The new Taliban regime has had a direct impact on the many humanitarian organisations supported by ECHO in Kabul. Since 28 September uncompromising laws forbid women to work, and force them to wear the full burqa veil whenever they go out. There is no exemption for foreigners.

Following the change of leadership, ECHO called a meeting of representatives of all its partners working in Afghanistan to assess the difficulties encountered in the field. All reported that they have had to reorganise, and all are anxious to continue their work which is now more vital than ever. At time of writing, ECHO is preparing an overall plan for Afghanistan, involving 32.5 million ECU.

Despite the fragile peace which is holding in Kabul, bitter fighting is taking place a few kilometres to the north. Generals Massoud and Dostom, formerly enemies, have joined forces in an attempt to retake the capital. This is a race against time, since allied troops

seem determined to seize back control of the town before winter. Although the Taliban offensive reopened the Peshawar-Kabul road to supplies, the humanitarian situation has not improved: on the contrary. The hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties from the fierce fighting of the last month. Accidents caused by the mines which pepper the town have increased significantly during recent weeks; of the 85 victims badly mutilated in such accidents last month, 65 were children. Under-nourishment affects 80% of the population, who have been living on bread and tea for months, a situation which has been made worse by the wage freeze declared by the Taliban.

The total ban on women working outside the home has had catastrophic effects in the clinics: there are practically no nurses at a time when war casualties are increasing, and women can no longer be treated at all since they cannot be touched by men. Since wounded Taliban are also suffering through lack of staff, they have begun to relax some rules to enable nurses to resume work in hospitals controlled by the ICRC. Women humanitarian workers, however, must either be sent home or restricted to office work.



Quidji/Gamma

War-wounded patients are flooding into hospitals without nurses

Medical aid features prominently in the global plan finalised by ECHO, the more so in the light of recent events. There are also several projects aimed at improving sanitation (Kabul is without water and electricity) to prevent the spread of epidemics. Vulnerable groups will receive special help, particularly widows affected by the Taliban prohibition on work. These women, who no longer have any means of providing for their families, will initially receive food, fuel (the temperature drops to -20°C in winter) blankets and warm clothing. ECHO also supports several projects, mostly in the field of medical aid, in other areas of Afghanistan.

CUBA Island's lifeline

The European Union's consistent humanitarian aid in Cuba since 1993 has been a vital lifeline for the island's population. That is the conclusion of a study carried out by three independent doctors. European aid has made it possible to sustain the Cuban health system, which has been badly affected by the general economic crisis. It has also made it possible to deal with the most urgent health and nutritional problems in vulnerable groups, namely children, pregnant women, the sick and the elderly. Because Cuba cannot afford to import essential food and medicine, the humanitarian effort must go on, albeit on a lesser scale to avoid increasing dependence on external aid. ECHO's third global plan provides 8 million ECU for a year (the second global plan involved 15 million ECU) and will be co-ordinated by the ECHO technical assistance office in Havana. Projects will be carried out by European NGOs, with the support of a local NGO, Caritas Cuba.

Field report

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Young people: the key to the future

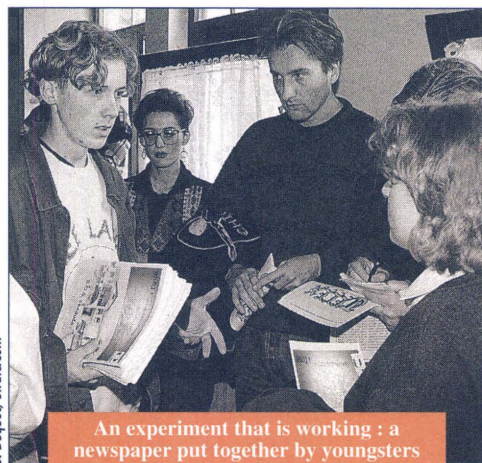
A squabble between youngsters turned into a major incident in a Sarajevo youth club when one badly disturbed youth pulled the pin from a grenade and threw it into the middle of the room. The explosion seriously injured nearly a dozen there. This tragedy, which took place just a few weeks ago in the youth club run by the NGO France-Libertés (supported by ECHO) in Sarajevo, illustrates the despair and the problems young Bosnians face as they try to recover from the experiences of four years of war.

"They don't want to go to school because they can't see any point. Through the workshops we run, we try to give them back a taste for learning". Alongside psychological work with traumatised youngsters, the NGO tries to get them interested in computer or photography workshops. This can be quite effective. At the request of a youth club, a Swiss artist, Jacques Biolley, came to Sarajevo to paint a huge mural with the help of a group of very enthusiastic teenagers.

Left on their own

"Young people here have to cope with enormous social problems," explained Elmir Bojadzic, an ECHO worker in Sarajevo. "During the war their parents neglected them because the most pressing need was finding food and water. Now there's so much unemployment that parents spend their time looking for work. The result is that many children and teenagers are left to their own devices for most of the day."

To the difficulty of drawing youngsters back into school life we must add the problems caused by the



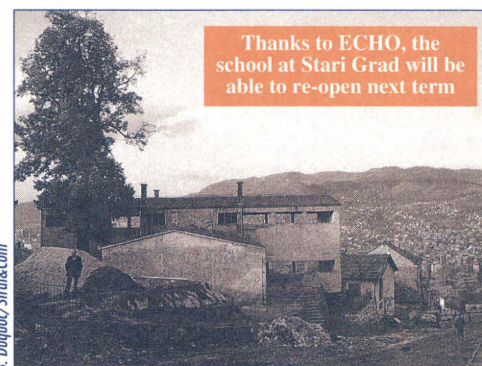
S. Duquoc/Strat&Com

An experiment that is working: a newspaper put together by youngsters of different ethnic groups

How do you go about rebuilding a country when people are in the grip of a widespread crisis of confidence? Though the guns have been silent for a year, now anger, hatred and distrust are still common in a world where friends and neighbours have betrayed each other. These negative feelings feed the tensions and are the biggest obstacle on the road to peace and reconciliation. This is why ECHO is now supporting a number of projects aimed particularly at young people, who will be the key players in building the Bosnia-Herzegovina of tomorrow.

Restoring a taste for learning

"The young people who come to our centre have lost all hope for the future", explained Lejla Dizdarevic, who runs a France-Libertés youth club in Sarajevo.

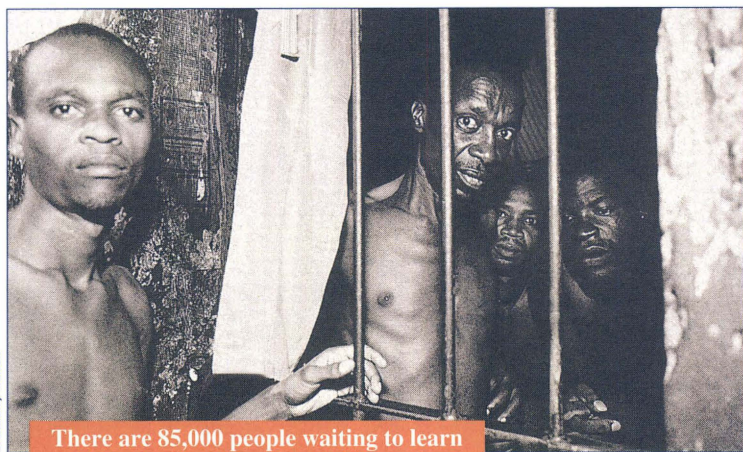


S. Duquoc/Strat&Com

Thanks to ECHO, the school at Stari Grad will be able to re-open next term

destruction of the infrastructure. ECHO has addressed this problem through a number of rebuilding projects. For example, thanks to ECHO finance, a primary school in Stari Grad - situated in the old town of Sarajevo - will be able to re-open its doors in early 1997. Barely 300 metres from the front line, surrounded by walls bearing the warning "Attention snipers!" painted in red, the school had been completely destroyed.

► see page 4



Chabani/Liaison

There are 85,000 people waiting to learn their fate in the prisons of Rwanda

In July, I joined 6,000 women in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina for a grim anniversary: the massacre of their menfolk a year earlier in Srebrenica at the hands of Bosnian Serbs. About 8,000 men and boys died in one of the most horrible atrocities in former Yugoslavia's dirty war. In Tuzla, now home to about 30,000 survivors of Srebrenica, we watched film footage of the day when Ratko Mladic's men rounded up women and children, bussing them away while herding the men to their deaths. The women have survived, but they and their children will never be at peace until the killers are brought to justice.

In 1993, the United Nations Security Council bowed to public pressure and set up an ad hoc tribunal to try crimes against humanity in former Yugoslavia. The UN has set up a separate temporary tribunal to try those accused of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Like the war crimes tribunals of Nuremberg and Tokyo, these two ad hoc tribunals will eventually be dissolved.

In 1945, after the Second World War, people thought: never again. They believed they had seen the end of such atrocities. Not so. Since the end of the Cold War, the barbarity of crimes committed against civilians has not ceased to horrify us, particularly as we can now see the evidence practically in real-time on our TV screens.

Contact your local section of Amnesty International for details of their campaign on this issue.

WHY WE NEED A PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

By Emma Bonino
Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

We have witnessed some of the worst crimes against humanity in history over the past five years. The criminals must be tried, justice must be done. And we need guarantees that any who contemplate such acts in future face the deterrent of a permanent international criminal court.

Societies shattered by such nightmares cannot resume more than a semblance of normal life unless there is a record of what happened, unless the guilty are brought to justice and punished, unless the innocent are cleared. Without justice, generation after generation is condemned to an existence haunted by the terrors of the past.

Need for a deterrent

We must take the initiative, we must act in advance, by setting up a permanent international criminal court. If we believe what we say when we sign international declarations of respect for human rights, an international court to guarantee justice and to deter potential criminals is a logical outcome.

I believe such a court could make a significant contribution to enabling reconciliation after conflicts, and even to prevention, up to a point. So why do we not have such a court already? The idea is hardly new, but it got shelved during the Cold War. It is back on the agenda at the United Nations today. There must be no foot-dragging. Such a court could do nothing to bring back those who died in Rwanda or former Yugoslavia. But we live in a world where the present shows clearly that we need a deterrent for the future. We must act now.

ECHO TV awards

"And the winner is ..."

Suspense will be running high until December 9, when European Commissioner for humanitarian aid Emma Bonino and President Mary Robinson of Ireland will be announcing the winners of the ECHO TV awards for the best humanitarian-related reports. ECHO has sought to use the contest to underscore the important rôle the media play in making the public aware of situations they would generally know little about if it were not for the media coverage. The nominees in each category are as follows :

People on the move: Escape from Tibet (Yorkshire TV, UK), L'aube-dawn (Causes Communes, Belgium), House of the Angels (UR, Sweden)

In the minds of people: Enemy my friend ? (Eyedeads, UK), Raped women in Bosnia (Frontline News, The Netherlands), The road back (Gta films AB, Sweden)

Forgotten conflicts: Inside Burma - Land of fear (Carlton TV, UK), Liberia, the murder of a country (Sveriges Television, Sweden), Russian Wonderland-Deserters (LGI/Mosaic Pictures, UK)

Vulnerable groups: The children, the mines, the hope (ZDF, Germany), Gamins d'Angola (SIC TV, Portugal), The dead are alive (Wild Heart Productions, Belgium)

Radio award: Libéria, l'école de la guerre (Agence Periscope, France), The Plight of Turkish Writers (Eurofile, Radio 4, BBC, UK), Worlds Apart n°10 (RT, Ireland)

Broadcast commitment: The price of petrol (Granada TV, UK), Divided World (RT, Ireland), Coverage of the UN War Crimes Tribunal (Internews, Europe).

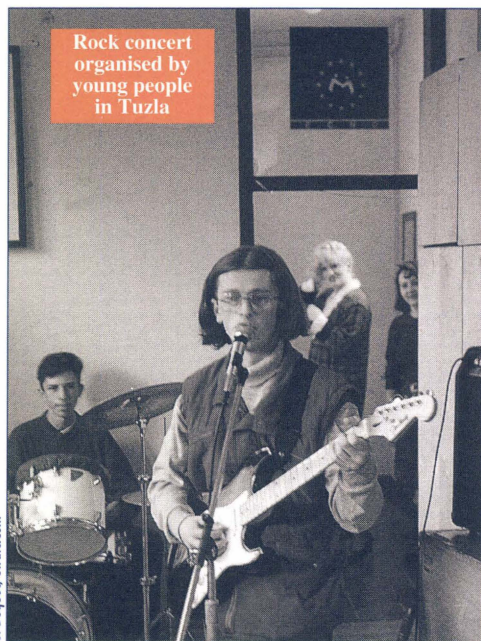
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Getting children back to school is a vital step in the returning the country to normal life, and ECHO is rebuilding schools in various parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina such as Gorazde and Tuzla. Alongside programmes to restore homes and basic infrastructure, opening schools is one element which gives refugees and displaced people the confidence to return to their original villages.

Astérix in Gorazde

The enclave at Gorazde, which is completely destroyed, is a sinister sight. Three hundred stray dogs roam the empty streets. To persuade people to return, the European Union is playing an active part in the enclave. It's worth pointing out that the European Union is one of the only donors committed to maintaining a presence at all costs in this fragile region surrounded by Serb territory. Projects financed by ECHO (restoration of homes, schools, and the local hospital) go hand in hand with reconstruction work initiated by the Commission's DG IA. ECHO supports one particularly unusual project run by the NGO Equilibre: a cinema in Gorazde. Here children can watch a full-length Astérix film, and identify with the gallant Gauls encircled by the Romans. This has proved to be a very popular entertainment in a devastated region which offers few other distractions.

There might be a future for Bosnia-Herzegovina if young people from both sides (the Croat-Moslem Federation and the Republika Serpska) could talk to each other. This is one of the aims of the "TELEX" youth centre set up by the



S. Duque/Strat&Com

Young people : the key to the future

NGO Terre des Hommes working with a local NGA in Tuzla financed by ECHO. No fewer than 1,500 young people aged between 12 and 18 use the centre regularly. A wide range of activities is organised, such as guitar lessons, English courses, help with school work etc. One particularly interesting project involves producing a newspaper. About 40 youngsters are taking part as journalists.

Reaching out through the Internet

To carry out their enquiries they are using e-mail to contact other young people in "kids' computer clubs" in the Republika Serpska, showing how the Internet can bring youngsters together. TELEX also organises an "SOS" telephone service run for and by young people. "Isolation, drugs and problems related to going back to school are the main reasons for calling," explained Valérie Renard of the Tuzla ECHO office. Returning to school is such a major problem that the computer workshop programme organised by TELEX is entirely given over to this issue. TELEX has also arranged joint holidays for youngsters from Tuzla and the western part of Mostar. It is clear to field workers that reconciliation is the first priority if Bosnia-Herzegovina is to be successfully rebuilt.

Isabelle Brusselmans